

U.S. investigators accuse China of stealing nuclear warhead data

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Intelligence officials accused China on Wednesday of stealing U.S. nuclear weapons information, including data related to America's most advanced nuclear warhead and the neutron bomb. "China obtained by espionage classified U.S. nuclear weapons information that probably accelerated its programme to develop nuclear weapons," said a report compiled by seven intelligence agencies released to Congress and the White House. China was able to get through a variety of means, including spies, inadvertent leaks from U.S. scientists, and attending specialised conferences, material related to "several" modern nuclear warheads including the Trident II or W-88, according to the report.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرأى

Volume 24 Number 7125

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, APRIL 22-23, 1999, MUHARRAM 6-7, 1420

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

King holds 'positive' talks with Assad

Landmark visit opens 'new chapter' in Jordan-Syria relations — Syrian president

By Abdullah Hasanat
with Agencies

DAMASCUS — A new era in Jordanian-Syrian relations was ushered yesterday with His Majesty King Abdullah's first visit to Damascus, a senior official said on Wednesday.

"Syrian President Hafez Assad told King Abdullah that he is opening a new chapter in relations," the senior official told the Jordan Times.

King Abdullah, who was met at the airport by President Assad, was welcomed warmly with the press in the two countries hailing the visit.

The two leaders reviewed an honour guard at the airport and received a 21-gun salute before going straight into talks.

During the two-and-a-half-hour meeting at Tishrin palace, "King Abdullah and President Assad discussed all bilateral issues and ways of strengthening relations as well as regional developments," said the official, who asked not to be named.

"The two leaders reiterated the importance of maintaining close cooperation between the two countries in all fields," said the official. "The positive atmosphere indicates that obstacles facing our bilateral relations could be solved."

King Abdullah and Assad will discuss Al-Wihdah dam, which the two countries plan to build on the Yarmouk River, and reactivating the Jordanian-

Syrian committee chaired by the two countries' prime ministers.

A senior Syrian official said the talks would cover the latest developments in Arab-Israeli peace talks "in light of Israel's policies which are blocking progress in the... process."

"There is no doubt that talks between the president and King Abdullah will boost bilateral relations and strengthen Arab solidarity," said a Syrian official quoted by Reuters.

King Abdullah's visit to Syria, his first since ascending the Throne, follows years of strained relations since Jordan signed the peace treaty with Israel in 1994 without waiting for Syria to conclude peace negotiations with Tel Aviv.

Assad had not visited Jordan for five years until he made a surprise appearance at King Hussein's funeral on Feb. 8. Later the same month, Assad's son Bashar, who news reports have said is in charge of the Jordan-Syria relations file, visited Amman to offer King Abdullah his condolences.

Jordan and Syria have also had disagreements over the amount of water Syria uses from the Yarmouk River on their joint border and Amman's growing cooperation with Turkey.

Jordan has repeatedly said that its warm ties with Turkey are not a threat to Syria.

(Continued on page 2)



His Majesty King Abdullah greets Syrian President Hafez Assad at Damascus airport on Wednesday. King Abdullah arrived for talks with Assad on his first visit to Syria since ascending the Throne (AFP photo)

Senior Palestinian official receives diplomats in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Faisal Husseini, the top PLO official in Jerusalem, received Arab diplomats in the disputed city on Wednesday on the eve of a court decision on Palestinian expulsions. Husseini met Egyptian, Moroccan, Omani and Qatari envoys at the unofficial Palestinian headquarters in Arab east Jerusalem, Orient House, where he informed them of "Israeli measures against Palestinians in the city." He also asked them to organise a campaign in their countries to support Arab east Jerusalem and Palestinian institutions in the city.

Arafat accuses Israeli PM of trying to wreck Mideast peace process

CAIRO (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday of trying to wreck the Middle East peace process.

"Netanyahu insists on destroying everything to do with the peace process, including the Wye River accord which he signed himself as well as preceding agreements," Arafat told reporters here.

Arafat, who arrived in Cairo late Tuesday to discuss a possible unilateral declaration of a state on May 4, was referring to the U.S.-brokered accord in October which called for a further Israeli withdrawal on the West Bank.

Arafat, who also held talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, declined to say whether he had agreed to delay a unilateral proclamation of a state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip on May 4, when five-year interim autonomy accords expire.

"The decision on this issue is entrusted to the Central Palestinian Council which will meet April 27," he said. Netanyahu's government has threatened to take unilateral action of its own if Arafat declares a state.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Arafat had told Mubarak that he had "felt a convergence of international views on the

right of the Palestinian people to self-determination."

Arafat visited Rabat on Monday as part of an Arab and international tour aimed at increasing world support for the right of the Palestinians to proclaim their own state.

On his return to Gaza later Wednesday, Arafat said he was satisfied with the results of his tour.

"The results of my consultations were positive and important for us, at a time when the interim autonomy period is expiring, and we face a freeze in the peace process caused by Benjamin Netanyahu," he told reporters.

"The Oslo accord was international, not bilateral, and I am sorry Netanyahu is not respecting, nor implementing the agreement," Arafat said.

During his tour, Arafat has been advised by nearly all his hosts to postpone an independence declaration.

Many officials have warned such a proclamation would strengthen the hand of Netanyahu and other hardliners in Israel's general elections on May 17.

Arafat was visiting Cairo a day before Israeli President Ezer Weizman was to travel here for talks with Mubarak, which are also to focus on the issue of statehood. Weizman's office said.

Barak says Netanyahu has created Palestinian state

TEL AVIV (R) — Ehud Barak, the frontrunner in Israel's prime ministerial race, said on Wednesday that a Palestinian state had effectively been established and that the central question was how to make it a "friendly neighbour."

Barak said the policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his main opponent in the May 17 general election, had halted peacemaking while unintentionally encouraging international support for the idea of Palestinian independence.

"A Palestinian state is not my dream... but Netanyahu has created something that is in effect a Palestinian state," Barak told Israel Radio in an independence day interview.

"So we are not dealing with the question of what kind of Palestinian entity will sprout up, but with how to make the Palestinian state Netanyahu set up not hostile to the state of Israel and a friendly neighbour," Barak said.

He stressed that a Palestinian state had to be demilitarised

and could not exist on all of the West Bank and Gaza which Israel occupied in 1967. Palestinians want the whole area for their state.

The PLO's Central Council is due to meet in Gaza on Tuesday to discuss whether to declare a Palestinian state on May 4, as Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has promised.

Barak, an ex-army chief who leads the left-leaning Labour Party, said he did not believe Arafat would go ahead with the declaration.

Arafat, who returned to Gaza on Wednesday from a multi-nation tour aimed at bolstering support for a Palestinian state, has said he retains the right to declare a state on May 4 when an interim self-rule agreement with Israel expires.

He has come under strong Arab and international pressure to delay the declaration to avoid affecting Israel's election.

Netanyahu, campaigning for reelection on a platform of opposition to a Palestinian state, has threatened to annex

parts of the West Bank if Arafat goes ahead.

A poll published in March showed 55 per cent of Israelis believe Palestinian demands for a state are justified compared to 42 per cent who disagree. The issue has nevertheless been largely absent from debate ahead of the forthcoming poll.

Earlier on Wednesday, Barak called the possible spread of nuclear weapons to countries like Iran and Iraq the most serious threat facing the Jewish state on its 51st birthday.

Barak said he would raise the issue with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov when they meet on Thursday in Jerusalem.

Israel says Russia is helping Iran build long-range missiles and develop nuclear technology, a charge Moscow denies.

"The possibility that the Middle East will become an area rife with nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction and missiles that carry these weapons is the biggest danger facing Israel," Barak said.

NATO hits Milosevic's party headquarters in Belgrade, destroys last bridge at Novi Sad

10 reported dead in NATO strike; Russian envoy to visit Yugoslav capital on Thursday

Agencies

NATO ON Wednesday smashed one of the symbols of Slobodan Milosevic's power and ushered in its much-feared Apache helicopter strike force, as it prepared for a summit where leaders would discuss the option of launching a ground offensive.

As NATO's air campaign reached the four-week mark, having inflicted a swathe of destruction yet without achieving any of its stated goals, Russia announced a new peace initiative, saying it would send former Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin on a mission to Belgrade on Thursday.

He will be the latest envoy in a string of Russian missions to Belgrade, the most recent of which has been the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Alexy II.

A trio of NATO missiles slammed overnight into the Belgrade headquarters of the Yugoslav president's Socialist Party, in a surgical strike that wrecked 10 of its 23 floors and triggered a huge blaze but caused no known casualties.

The attack appeared to mark a further escalation in NATO's strategy, after a four-week air campaign, often thwarted by bad weather, that first struck at only military targets, then moved on to communications and industrial sites.

"We're not targeting Milosevic, but the power structure that makes him what he is," NATO spokesman Jamie Shea declared in Brussels, although he said the attack proved "there is no sanctuary" for Milosevic.

Shea said the tower block, which also houses a TV station run by the president's daughter Marija, contained military communications and was "a high value target at the centre of the power structure."

Other Western air strikes hit the last remaining bridge over

the Danube at Novi Sad, Serbia's second city. The Yugoslav news agency Tanjug said road traffic was halted, trains blocked and water supplies cut for some 40,000 people.

Tanjug said NATO missiles killed at least 10 people at a camp in western Kosovo housing several hundred Serb refugees from the former Yugoslav republic of Croatia.

Yugoslav media reported NATO attacks on a television transmitter and an oil refinery near Novi Sad, an airport in central Serbia and a factory in Valjevo.

Meanwhile, the first of 24 U.S. Apache attack helicopters — a star of the 1991 Gulf War — finally arrived at the Rinas military airport outside Tirana on Wednesday.

Operating from Albanian soil, the Apaches, backed by hi-tech rocket launchers based on the ground, will enable the alliance to open a second front, striking at tanks, armoured cars and troop convoys in Kosovo. The fearsome tank-busters had been due to arrive by the end of last week but were held up while work crews readied landing facilities at Rinas, which has been bogged down in mud.

After mustering a dazzling array of firepower, NATO launched the offensive on March 24 with the aims of ending Belgrade's repression of the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo and forcing Milosevic to sign a peace deal on the province's political future.

But four weeks later, neither objective has been reached, despite NATO's appeals for patience and its insistence that the offensive is steadily grinding down Yugoslavia's military machine.

An operation by Serb forces to drive out the Kosovo population has caused around 530,000 people to seek safety

in Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said Wednesday. In Albania, a helicopter airlift to move refugees away from the border and make room for new arrivals got off to a bad start. Dozens refused to leave and the rest were kept waiting for hours before finally taking off.

Macedonian barred frustrated aid workers from access to 7,000 snowbound refugees in an isolated village because the road passes briefly through Yugoslav territory.

Britain on Thursday will host a meeting of key NATO partners to plan for their eventual return to Kosovo, it was announced in London.

In recent days, horror at the atrocities still unfolding in Kosovo has caused opinion in Europe and the United States to urge NATO to break the taboo of a ground offensive to kick out Serb forces from Kosovo.

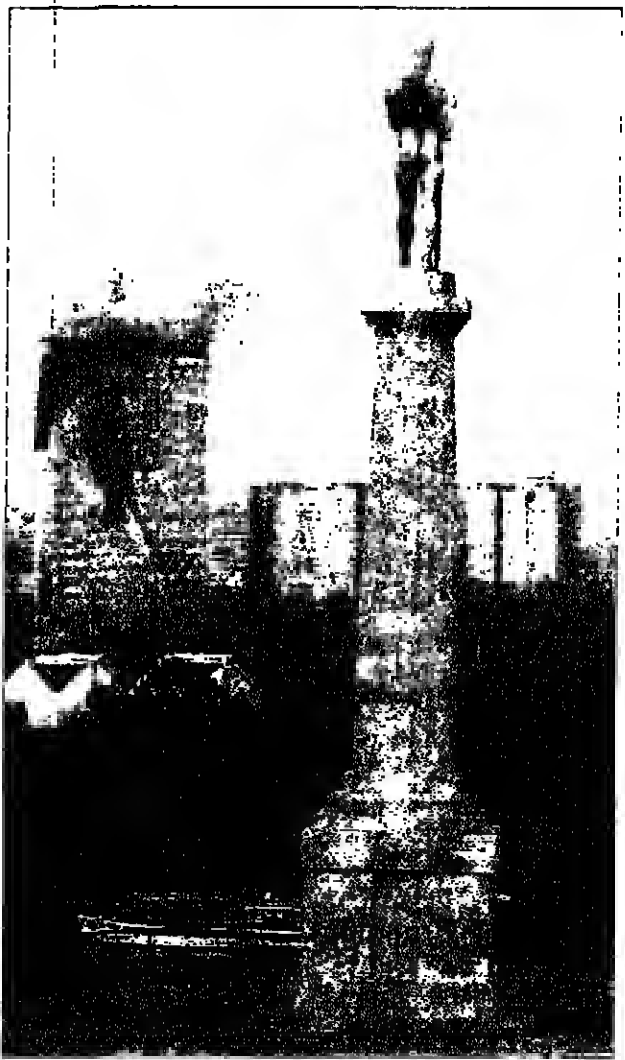
The option of ground forces "will be discussed" at NATO's 50th anniversary summit, opening in Washington on Friday, a spokesman for British Prime Minister Tony Blair said in London.

After four weeks of air war, there are growing signs that the alliance is contemplating a ground invasion of the southern Serbian province.

According to a U.S. official who asked not to be identified, NATO made a contingency plan for a ground attack last year and Supreme Commander General Wesley Clark may seek authorisation to update it "to reflect the facts on the ground."

"That does not necessarily get us any closer to the deployment of ground troops," the official said.

President Bill Clinton's spokesman Joe Lockhart said Washington would agree to the



A pall of smoke rises from a high-rise housing the offices of the ruling Socialist Party of Serbia and three local TV and radio stations in Belgrade after it was hit by NATO air strikes early Wednesday. In the foreground is the monument 'The Victor,' a distinctive symbol of Belgrade, marking victory in WWI (AP photo)

update. NATO Secretary General Javier Solana told CNN's Spanish television service that "it is impossible at this moment to deploy a ground force until Serbia's military force is weakened further."

"The objective for now is to weaken as much as possible Serbia's military capacity, mainly to stop the barbarities and brutalities they have been conducting," Solana said. Diplomats say European Union states have agreed to block fuel supplies to Yugoslavia.

(Continued on page 2)

Turkish nationalists say ties with Europe need revision

ANKARA (AFP) — The chairman of the extreme-right Nationalist Action Party (MHP), which scored a huge success in Sunday's general elections, has said that Ankara's sour ties with the European Union (EU) need to be looked over.

"Membership of the EU has become a state policy... If no result has been attained in the process of joining the EU for a long time, then it means that there are aspects which need to be revised," MHP Chairman Devlet Bahceli said in comments to two Turkish newspapers published on Wednesday.

Urging against "losing

more time," Bahceli added that Turkish-EU ties "needed to be looked over mutually from all aspects."

"Turkey should evaluate other opportunities, for example with the Turkic states of Central Asia," he added.

Ankara enjoys cultural and ethnic ties with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in Central Asia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus, where it undertakes significant investments.

According to unofficial results, the MHP has garnered 18.2 per cent of the votes on a national level,

coming in second after the Democratic Left Party (DSP) of Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit which took 22 per cent.

Observers say the MHP, with 130 seats in the 550-seat parliament, will have a say in the formation of a new government with the DSP which is expected to command 136 seats.

Turkey's ties with the EU received a major blow when Ankara suspended political dialogue with the 15-nation group after its bid to become a full-member was rejected once again at the Luxembourg summit in December 1997.

Lebanese Film Festival explores aftershocks of civil war



Shadows at the Lebanese Film Festival

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — Theatre gave way to film on Wednesday, when the Lebanese Film Festival commenced its activities one day after the conclusion of the 6th International Theatre Festival at the Royal Cultural Centre.

The festival, organised by the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, opened with two films, "Shadows," a six-minute film about a chase between two men in the streets of Beirut, and "Ghosts of Beirut," a feature film about one man's struggle to retrieve his identity after having escaped Beirut.

films to full-length features. The majority of the participating films revolve around the Lebanese civil war, and its severe after-effects.

Adnan Madanat, director of the foundation's film committee, defines the Lebanese cinema as a "young and very serious" industry.

"Most Lebanese directors and film-makers are young, but they all share one interest, the need to talk about the Lebanese ordeal," Madanat said.

He explained that most Lebanese directors grew up during war-time, therefore, their films are an attempt to retrieve the identity of pre-war Lebanon and to reflect on their political and historical environment.

"The Neighbourhood," for example, is a short film that deals with the struggle to restore Beirut's identity after the 17-year war. This issue is treated through the eyes of a young boy living in a common neighbourhood.

"Tango of Hope," by Mohammad Suweid, is a feature based on the director's biography. The film deals with Suweid's personal experience in war, love and cinema.

"The Lebanese cinema is very daring in its expressions, its contents and the technical aspects implemented," Madanat added. "It is not developed as an industry, but the new generation is trying very hard to create a cinema."

able funding.

Most Arabic films shown in Jordan, for example, participate in the "Franco-Arab Film Festival for Joint Productions." The festival hosts films produced with the help of French funding or technical crews.

Most North African and Lebanese film-makers resort to joint productions with European companies, mainly in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and England.

Several film-makers were expecting "West Beirut," a critically-acclaimed film by Ziad Dweiri, to participate in the festival. Madanat said the film will be shown in the 4th Franco-Arab film festival, which will be held at the beginning of July.

Lebanon has been chosen as the host for this year's festival in accordance with the foundation's yearly tradition of introducing Jordanian viewers to the cinema of a specific Arab country.

The tradition began in 1996, when the Libyan Film Festival took place. Tunisia was the host of the second festival in 1998. Madanat said that the number of attendees for each festival have exceeded his expectations.

The festival will be attended by some Lebanese directors including Mohammad Suweid (director of "The Neighbourhood"), Nigoul Bazargan (director of "Chickpeas"), and Rania Estephane (director of "Ba'al and Death").

The festival, organised in cooperation with the Municipality of Amman, will run until April 29th.

Bickering scuttles opposition's plans for joint platform in municipal elections

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — When the Islamists last month declared their decision to participate in the upcoming municipal elections, some thought that the dream of a joint platform for the country's 13 opposition parties finally had been given a chance of success. Some politicians went even further, floating the possibility of unified tickets in some constituencies.

But such hopes — or "romantic dreams," as one leftist leader put it — were shattered this week during a meeting of the Higher Committee for Coordination Among the Opposition Parties (HCCOAP), and today the opposition seems as divided as ever.

Accusations are flying back and forth, with the Islamists accusing smaller parties of trying to ride on their coattails and exploiting the benefits of an eventual victory they could not secure on their own. Leaders of leftist and pan-Arabist parties, on the other hand, are accusing the Islamists of hampering the opposition's performance for "protagonistic and selfish reasons."

Proposals to unify political programmes and tickets for the July municipal elections

were presented at an HCCOAP meeting on Monday, but the Islamists hold the key.

"We are still waiting for a clear message from the Islamists," Deputy Mohammad Ouran (Tafleh), secretary general of the Arab Land Party, said on Wednesday. "We agreed to meet again in mid-May," he said. "Until then, we have agreed to set up a campaign to urge people to register and encourage participation," he added.

But after Monday's meeting, participants almost unanimously ruled out the possibility of joint platform and tickets.

"Who says this would be good for the opposition, in the first place?" asked an analyst close to the Islamic Action Front (IAF).

"Coordination does not mean that we must have identical views on everything."

"On the other hand, you can clearly see that only those who stand no chance of winning want unified tickets, so that if Islamist candidates win, they will be able to say 'We won'."

Sources from eight opposition parties have privately admitted having less than 900 paying members, with membership estimated below 500 for at least three of them.

Political parties are generally reluctant to reveal their membership, stressing that it only corresponds in small part to the following they would be able to muster in case of elections or campaigns. The IAF, on the other hand, is said to have a few thousand members.

"It is the same old story," said a leftist leader. "When they are [involved] in something, they want complete control," he said referring to the Islamists.

A one-year-old project for a "national conference" gathering all opposition parties, independent personalities, professional unions, and civil society institutions to draft a "national salvation plan," has yet to take off, due, among several reasons, to allegations by some invitees that the IAF and its mother organisation, the Muslim Brotherhood, want to "dominate" the conference's executive council and impose their views in the draft of the salvation plan.

The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs announced last month that municipal elections will be held on July 14, with a five-day campaigning period ahead of the voting.

Officials said elections will take place in the 305 municipalities listed in the 1985 law,

amended in 1995, since long-time plans to merge the existing councils into around 170 new municipalities will require lengthy implementation procedures. Voting should take place in one day, but some polling stations may stay open for an additional day if a quorum of 51 per cent of registered voters has not been achieved by the end of the first day.

The 1995 elections witnessed a national turnout of 72 per cent and the election of one woman mayor.

Now, longstanding criticism of the current legislation, under which the mayor and half of the Amman Municipality Council's 40 members are appointed by the Council of Ministers, the IAF has announced that it will take part in the elections.

The Islamists and eight other parties launched a historic boycott of the November 1997 parliamentary polls in protest against the 1994 peace treaty with Israel, and the elections and press laws.

IAF sources have said the decision to participate in the local elections stemmed from the party's need to strengthen its grassroots reach and test a following that official IAF reports say has decreased in the past months.

Security court sentences three for heroin smuggling

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The State Security Court on Wednesday sentenced three men to 10-year prison terms with hard labour after convicting them of smuggling heroin from neighbouring countries into Jordan.

The three suspects, aged 30, 37 and 38, were first sentenced to 15-years with hard labour and were ordered to pay a JD10,000 fine by the court tribunal for smuggling heroin.

However, their sentence was reduced to half because "they had no criminal records and to give them a second chance in life," the military court ruled. Their fine was reduced to JD5,000.

The same court acquit-

ted two men, an 18-year-old man and another man, who was being tried in absentia, "for lack of evidence."

Two other defendants, tried in absentia, were each sentenced to 15-years and a JD20,000 fine.

According to court documents, the seven defendants, including a retired army officer, were smuggling heroin from Turkey, and Syria.

They were arrested by Anti-Narcotics Department agents while smuggling 15 kilograms of heroin into the Kingdom.

All three verdicts handed down by Justices Tayel Raqad, Ahmad Harran and Ahmad Ayash, will automatically be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within 30 days.

Tribal squabble erupts at University of Jordan

By Sa'ad G. Hattar

AMMAN — A wide-scale stone-hurling tribal wrangle erupted on Wednesday at the University of Jordan, involving nearly 100 students, eyewitnesses said.

The severity of the fight between students originally from Salt (30 kilometres west of Amman) and their Ahbadi colleagues, from Balqa-Wadi Soer, prompted police to deploy outside the campus as a precautionary measure while university officials sought to end what students described as a tribal feud.

Police did not enter the campus, but checked the identity of entering and exiting students in a bid to contain the fight. They also partially cordoned off the frontal road leading to the main gate.

There were no reports of arrests, nor were any casualties reported.

University of Jordan Presi-

dent Walid Maani rushed to the "battle scene" inside the main gate and defused the tension between the two sides.

According to eyewitnesses, the fight was sparked by a squabble between two students in the Education Faculty, although the reason for the dispute was not immediately clear.

Several campus lamps were broken in the ensuing fracas, and some students broke off tree branches to use as weapons.

The incident took place two days after the university's student council elections, in which the powerful Islamist movement reclaimed a majority on the council.

The University of Jordan, the largest and oldest with 23 thousand students, has witnessed similar sectarian squabbles in the past.

Filipina domestic helper drops rape charges

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — A Filipina domestic helper, who last week levelled an accusation of rape against a former minister, left Amman after dropping charges against the man, police sources said on Wednesday.

The plaintiff dropped her charges following unconfirmed reports of an out of court settlement with the former minister's family.

But sources close to the alleged defendant refuted those reports and stressed that no financial settle-

ment was reached.

The woman, in her late thirties, had filed an unprecedented suit against the former official accusing him of raping her on April 1 at his residence.

In her initial statement, she charged that the former minister took advantage of his family's absence to sexually assault her.

But sources close to the former minister refuted those charges in an interview with the Jordan Times.

Police question three men about armed assault on women's college bus

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police are questioning three men who last week allegedly opened fire on a busload of women students returning to Amman from a picnic in the Na'our area, according to official sources. The incident left no injuries.

According to the source, the students were in the bus when three men, driving in a pick up started harassing them, prompting the bus driver to attempt to push them away.

The three men responded by shooting live ammunition in the air forcing the students to take cover on the vehicle's floor for protection.

A college official, who preferred not to be identified, told the Jordan Times Wednesday evening that "police are handling the case and we have nothing to reveal."

Police contacted by the Jordan Times Wednesday evening confirmed the incident but refused comment.

Farmers and drought: One problem leads to another

By Dana Charkasi

DEIR ALLA — Farmers see difficult times ahead as the government prepares to implement one measure of its drought contingency plan that will draw extra water from the Jordan Valley, the country's food basket, to supply the capital with drinking water.

Farmers said the government's decision to cut water supplies to the valley by 40 per cent to avert a drinking water crisis in Amman during summer months — when the capital's consumption increases by 30 per cent — has pushed them to shift production to crops that require less water.

This winter's rainfall left Jordan with less than 40 per cent of its annual average, forcing the government to declare a state of drought in January.

At that time, experts began advising farmers not to plant during summer and only maintain already existing trees. At the very least, they recommended that farmers reduce their planting area by 30 per cent to 50 per cent and plant only low water consumption crops with a short vegetation season in order to avoid crop failure.

Adel Fardous, deputy director of the National Centre for Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer,

"The income from this piece of land is the only one I have got. If I plant the whole 10 dunums I [probably] will lose. But if I plant only three dunums, I will lose everything"

— Saad Abdullah Ahmad, farmer

said he believes the centre's awareness campaign to encourage farmers to diversify and reduce production have been relatively successful, and several Jordan Valley farmers told the Jordan Times that they had already begun doing so.

Many of the Jordan Valley farmers are share-farmers, who depend on the income generated by their produce to sustain their annual livelihoods and pay the rent on the land they farm. The shortage of water during the coming summer season threatens their very existence.

Mohammad Said, an Egyptian labourer in the valley, said the owner of the farm where he works had already decided not to plant one fourth of his land, usually used for vegetables, and instead concentrate on flowers.

"We already have less water now," he told the Jordan Times. "We used to get water five or six days a week, for nearly 24 hours. Now, we are getting it twice or three times, but only for twelve hours."

"I will not plant anything this summer," said Sami Said Ghokashaw, whose farm is situated in Deir Alla. "I will be happy if I can maintain my citrus trees."

Fardous said that farmers should avoid crops such as

cucumbers, tomatoes, alfalfa, maloukiah and water melon.

"They should instead plant cherry tomatoes and flowers such as carnations and roses," he said.

Not all farmers have been as receptive to the government's suggestions, however.

Saad Abdullah Ahmad, who rents 10 dunums of land for JD500 a year, told the Jordan Times he will not reduce his planting area.

"I have to recover the expenditures I invested in the land, including rent, costs of seeds and seedlings, fertilisers and pesticides and fungicides," he said. "I spent around JD200 on pesticides and fungicides, but to no avail. I lost altogether JD500," he said.

"The income from this piece of land is the only one I have got," he added. "If I plant the whole 10 dunums I [probably] will lose. But if I only plant three dunums, I will lose everything."

Tobacco planter Salem Abu Zeid who rents 30 dunums for JD55 each per annum, said that they would already now have too little water.

"Every three days we have water for only three hours, but tobacco should have water every day," he

said. Farmers fear that the government may cut the water supply even more.

Officials are walking a thin line as they try to balance the Kingdom's overall water needs without instigating social unrest, and Dureid Mahasneh, head of the Jordan Valley Authority, concedes that the government has no plans to take legal action to force farmers to heed its advice.

But in the end, he said, it is the farmers themselves who will pay the price of overplanting.

"Farmers will have to adjust to the water pumped to them and to plant accordingly," he said. "If you have only JD20, you cannot do shopping for JD100."

Poor water quality further aggravates a bleak situation. Fardous said that water from the King Abdullah canal is unusually saline, due to a lack of rainfall, while massive fertiliser use has contributed to the salinisation of the soil, which in normal years is leached by floodwaters.

He said the situation threatens to deteriorate further during summer because of evaporation.

"Many of the crops are highly to moderately sensitive to salt. The salinity stress reduces production," Fardous said.

He explained that the volume of water stored in the soil has dropped from 60 per cent to 30 per cent, and that the average winter temperature was three to four degrees higher than the average winter temperature thus further decreasing the water stored in the soil.

Lack of knowledge and experience among small-scale farmers, he said, exacerbates the problem.

When farmers see weak looking seedlings, they spray pesticides and fungicides on them hoping for a recovery of their plants, he explained.

"They believe they are suffering from pests or fungi. In fact [the plants] look sad because of the high concentration of salt in the water," said Said Zureiqi, director of the regional Centre for Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer in Deir Alla, as he pointed at sick looking zucchini plants uprooted from the soil after pesticides and fungicides failed to rehabilitate the crop.

Fardous said the use of greenhouses and drip irrigation could further reduce water consumption, if the systems are efficient.

"Sixty-four per cent of farms already use drip irrigation. But due to a poor management on the farms, the systems are inefficient,"

he said, conceding that many small farmers may not have sufficient assets to either install drip irrigation, which costs JD100 per dunum, or erect plastic houses which cost around JD3,000 per dunum.

Figures provided by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation show that water allocated for agricultural use will be steadily reduced in favour of municipality and industrial use.

Many already question the added value of the agriculture sector, manned mostly by foreign labourers who send hard currency earnings back home. The sector only accounts for 6.2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Currently, 597 million cubic metres of water are used for agricultural purposes. By the year 2015,

agriculture will have to manage with 556 mcm. Water consumed for domestic use is 236 mcm, and will reach 411 mcm by 2005 and 438 mcm in 2010. Industry consumes 36 mcm and will consume 96 mcm in 2005 and 119 mcm by 2010.

Jordan's water deficit for the second half of this year is projected to reach approximately 10 per cent, with demand totalling 283 million cubic metres and supply amounting to 254 million cubic metres.

Official figures suggest that by the year 2000, Jordan's population, growing around 3.5 per cent a year, will require 1,257 million cubic metres of water to cover minimum needs while resources will be capable of supplying only 960 million cubic metres.

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Duma deals blow to Yeltsin over impeachment

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian parliament dealt a blow to President Boris Yeltsin on Wednesday by ruling that an impeachment vote against him due next month could be held in an open ballot.

The decision, reached on 329-42 vote, was a victory for Communist lawmakers who are pressing on with efforts to throw Yeltsin out of office before his term expired in summer 2000.

An open ballot, in which each lawmaker's vote is made public, means that fewer leftist deputies can defect from their party in support of Yeltsin.

The impeachment hearing had been tentatively rescheduled for mid-May after the state Duma deputies failed to agree on the precise voting procedure.

Previous procedure banned open ballots on impeachment, and the Duma will now decide whether to vote in secret or publicly when once the hearing is officially opened.

Yeltsin, who face a five-count hearing, would be impeached should lawmakers muster a two-thirds majority on any of the

charges.

Yeltsin faces impeachment for his role in disbanding the Soviet Union; his decision to launch a tank assault on parliament in 1993; for ruining the armed forces; for "genocide" of the people through poor economic policies; and for launching a disastrous 1994-1996 war in Chechnya.

Should the Duma impeach Yeltsin on any one of the five charges, the supreme and constitutional courts must rule whether the charges against Yeltsin are indeed criminal and legal.

If upheld, the Federation Council, the upper house of parliament run by independent regional governors, would need to muster a two-thirds majority to remove Yeltsin from office.

The whole process is elaborate and analysts suggest it is unlikely to succeed before Yeltsin's term runs out in summer 2000.

However impeachment would prove embarrassing for the president and may be used by the leftist opposition as a campaign weapon in the run-up to December's parliamentary elections.

Britain's Tories seek to break from past dogmas

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's opposition Conservatives are gradually disavowing the dogmas of their past in a desperate search for a new image to revitalise their moribund party.

Tory leader William Hague gave the clearest indication yet of the rethink late Tuesday when he admitted the all-out privatisation push of the 1980s was no longer appropriate.

His comments came at a dinner in honour of former Premier Margaret Thatcher, whose passion for privatisation marked her leadership.

Hague said her legacy had been to change and "it would be a tragedy if the one institution in Britain that didn't change was the Conservative Party."

"It's a great mistake to think that all the Conservatives have to offer is solutions based on free markets," he added.

"If we think that we would have little to say about public services where there are limits to the role of the market."

The Conservatives have been forced to rethink their whole future after an overwhelming defeat to Labour in general elections on May 1, 1997.

Even now, nearly two years on, they lag far behind Labour in opinion polls and Hague's personal rating is eclipsed by Prime Minister Tony Blair's.

The new message was

given simultaneously by Conservative number two Peter Lilley at a lecture elsewhere in London.

He said the party had to accept that the state should play a dominant role in financing health and education, which were too important to be left to the private sector alone.

Driving home the point he singled out health, welfare and education where, he said, "the market cannot fulfil our obligation to ensure that everyone has access to these services."

Nevertheless, Hague and Lilley were careful not to distance themselves too much from the past, which brought the Tories an unbroken 18 years in power up to the 1997 defeat.

Hague insisted he shared Thatcher's principles, but said "the way we apply those principles must change."

The dinner saw a thawing in the previously icy relations between Thatcher and the man she replaced as Conservative leader in 1975, Edward Heath.

For years, the pair clashed repeatedly over Europe, monetary policies and style, but Tuesday she paid tribute to him as "one of Britain's most forceful and effective prime ministers."

Later, for a formal photograph, she told him he ought to be at her right.

"That would be difficult," he retorted, remembering their past bouts.



Visitors queue outside the German parliament building Reichstag April 21 as it opens its gate for the public, expecting several hundred thousand visitors during the next five days. The Reichstag, a symbol of German parliamentary history was rebuilt after more than 50 years of parliamentary sessions in Bonn following renovation by British architect Sir Norman Foster at the cost of 600 million German marks (about \$330 million). After half a century in Bonn, the German parliament and government are moving in phases during the course of the year (Reuters photo)

Dutch ready El Al crash report, may target cabinet

THE HAGUE (R) — Seven years after an Israeli El-Al cargo plane plunged into an Amsterdam suburb, a parliamentary committee will publish on Thursday a potentially explosive report on the crash, El-Al's role and the Dutch response.

At least 43 people were killed when the Boeing 747 ploughed into the impoverished Bijlmer district on October 4, 1992. The real toll from the crash and the ensuing inferno may never be known because many Bijlmer residents were illegal, unregistered immigrants.

In the almost seven years since the disaster, rescue workers and hundreds of local people have reported chronic health complaints ranging from neurological disorders to nausea — illnesses that have been linked to the plane and its load.

Last year, a Dutch news-

paper unearthed freight papers that listed DMMP, a component of sarin nerve gas, in the cargo.

Israel confirmed the shipment of 190 litres of dmmp, but said the material was non-toxic and was to have been used to test filters that protect against chemical weapons.

Debate has also raged over the health implications of exposure to depleted uranium, which was used as wing ballast in the aircraft. Only 152 kg of the 282 kg on board were recovered after the crash and fire.

Thursday's report, the result of a six-month investigation and some 80 witness testimonies, must separate fact from fiction about the aircraft and its cargo. El-Al's role in subsequent inquiries and the handling of the aftermath of the crash by senior Dutch politicians.

If its findings are damning, heads could roll. Deputy Prime Ministers

Annemarie Jorritsma and Els Borst have pledged to resign if the committee concludes they failed in their respective duties as transport minister and health minister.

Borst, a member of the centrist D66, and Jorritsma, a VVD liberal, have been criticised for doing too little too late.

Both have rejected charges of inaction. The conduct of current Labour Prime Minister Wim Kok, his Christian Democrat predecessor Ruud Lubbers and former Transport Minister Hanja Maij-Weggen are also expected to come under the spotlight.

The report, to be presented to parliament, must clarify whether the aircraft's load was mundane, as El-Al has said, or contained weapons and chemicals as Dutch media, local residents and some politicians have alleged.

It is also expected to

examine whether El-Al afforded full cooperation to successive Dutch crash inquiries or concealed crucial documents.

In Bijlmer, where a tree called "the tree that saw everything" marks the spot where the plane came down, people have little confidence in the report and its conclusions.

"I did not follow the news of the Bijlmer inquiry because I don't speak Dutch," said an illegal immigrant from Ghana, who lived in a block of flats demolished in the crash.

Political commentators predict parliament will be at pains to avoid a government crisis at a time when Dutch forces are involved in NATO's bombing campaign against Yugoslavia.

"No one wants a cabinet crisis at a time of conflict," wrote the influential Volkskrant newspaper.

Explosives ruled out as cause of Korean Air jet crash

BEIJING (AFP) — Investigators searching through the wreckage of a Korean Air cargo jet which crashed near Shanghai killing eight people last week have ruled out explosives as the cause, officials said Wednesday.

"The possibility that the crash was caused by explosives has been ruled out," the Shanghai municipal government foreign affairs bureau said in a statement faxed to AFP.

It said the investigators — from China, South Korea and the United States — had also established that the MD-11's radar, weather protection equipment and the traffic

control situation at the time of the crash were all normal.

But rescue workers had found only fragments of the flight data recorder, or "black box", which might have contained vital information on the last moments of the aircraft's flight.

"Now we can be sure that the black box has been completely destroyed," the statement said.

It said investigators had already boarded a flight back to the United States carrying the recording discs of the cockpit voice recorder and pieces of the playback machine for analysis.

The crash of the MD-11 cargo plane late Thursday at Minhang, 12 kilometres from Shanghai's Hongqiao airport, killed five Chinese people on the ground and the three crew members. A further 36 people on the ground were injured.

South Korean and Chinese investigators at the site have found the altitude indicator, which showed the cargo jet had reached 1,000 metres when it started descending at a 30 degree angle.

The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board and the Civil Aviation Authority of China have identified three areas for investigation, a Korean Air official said Sunday.

These are firstly, flight standards, which would be revealed by the flight data recorders, engineering issues, which would study the structure of the aircraft and the parts found, and thirdly, public security, which would examine the cargo carried by the plane, he said.

U.S. aircraft maker McDonnell Douglas and Korean Air have also sent officials to Minhang.

Korean Air launched an urgent operational shake-up last October to tackle its safety record after the government took unprecedented punitive action over a string of accidents.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Robert McNamara warns against 'misreading the enemy'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Former U.S. Defence Secretary Robert McNamara, in a letter published Wednesday in the New York Times, advised the United States and NATO to avoid the same mistake made in Vietnam of "misreading the enemy." Although it is too soon to draw analogies with Vietnam, McNamara said, "there is a widespread fear that the two sides (in the Kosovo conflict) will be caught in a cycle of escalation, as occurred in Vietnam. 'As awful as Kosovo is now, the odds of a long-term tragedy will be far greater if we don't apply the lessons the Vietnam conflict taught us,' said McNamara, who prosecuted the Vietnam war under presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Drawing from the lessons of an "unprecedented series of dialogues with North Vietnamese officials," McNamara said he and several other former U.S. officials identified "missed opportunities" that might have avoided the Vietnam war or ended it before it became a tragedy. In Vietnam, he said, "each side miscalculated by repeatedly underestimating the costs and risks its adversary was willing to accept." Neither side, McNamara added, understood that "its former adversary was much more open to negotiations... than was believed at the time." These misjudgements "were not pre-ordained by some process of escalation that, as is implied by many who see the Balkans through the prism of Vietnam, was beyond human control," the former U.S. official said. From the U.S.-Vietnamese dialogues, he said, it was clear that "many opportunities existed along the way for leaders to do what they should have done — lead — rather than ignore the Vietnam crisis in slow motion."

'India and Pakistan spied on Swedish nuclear programme'

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Pakistan and India have used their embassies in Stockholm to spy on Swedish nuclear arms technology, Swedish public radio reported on Wednesday. In 1995 a Pakistani effort to smuggle out a sophisticated laser was revealed, and a few years later India tried to get confidential information and technology through a Swedish contact, the radio reported. A Swedish foreign ministry spokesman said that talks had been held with the Indian embassy in 1997, and that a member of their staff had had to leave Sweden, but would not give further details on the allegations. Neither the Indian nor Pakistani embassies would comment on the report. According to the radio, the first secretary of the Indian embassy, the son of a former Indian defence minister, tried to persuade a Swedish official to hand over a list of Swedish arms exports to India's arch rival Pakistan in 1997. He also showed interest in Swedish technology that could be used for civilian and military purposes. The official was in fact an agent for the Swedish secret police (SAEPO), the report said. The embassy secretary returned home as his diplomatic mission in Sweden was up.

N. Korea accuses South of blocking peace talks

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea on Wednesday blasted South Korea and the United States for blocking progress in upcoming peace talks by refusing to discuss the possible withdrawal of U.S. troops from the peninsula. "The latest trade came three days ahead of the start of Four-Party talks aimed at finally forging a permanent peace treaty to officially end the 1950-53 Korean war. 'The South Korean authorities are resorting to ever more dastardly moves to keep the issue of withdrawal of U.S. forces from being taken up by the Four-Party talks,' the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. "It is an undeniable obligation for the United States, a signatory to the Korean armistice, to discuss the issue of withdrawal of its forces to ensure durable peace with (North Korea) which is technically at war with it." KCNA said the refusal to discuss the issue, long rejected as an agenda item by both Seoul and Washington, which insist it can only be discussed after a peace pact is sealed, was a deliberate attempt to block progress at the talks. "The refusal of the U.S. to (discuss) it means, in a nutshell, that it is not genuinely interested in guaranteeing peace on the Korean peninsula and that it is unwilling to give up its policy of permanent occupation of South Korea. Officials here say major progress at the next round of talks in Geneva between April 24 and April 27 is unlikely. The talks will be the fifth round between South and North Korea, the United States and China in three years."

Aid worker claims he spied for Australia in East Timor

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — An Australian aid worker said on Wednesday he had spied for Australia for three years while working on an aid project in East Timor. The claim by Lansell Tadevin was dismissed by aussid, Australia's overseas aid agency. Tadevin was the team leader of a recently completed three-year water and sanitation project funded by aussid. He said he fled East Timor in February after receiving death threats. Tadevin said he was asked to provide regular intelligence reports to officials in Canberra on troop movements and the activities of pro-Indonesian paramilitary groups in East Timor. "You can call it spying, you can call it providing information," Tadevin told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio. He said he warned of a dangerous build-up in social tension in the disputed territory, but that his information was seen as alarmist. Tadevin said he now fears his actions could have compromised Australian aid work on East Timor. Aussid dismissed Tadevin's claims and said he was doing nothing more than providing routine information on possible threats to the safety of people working on his project. "I'm afraid Mr. Tadevin is not a spy, his claims are quite exaggerated," an aussid spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "The Australian embassy maintained regular contact as a matter of course, as you would expect them to do. There's absolutely nothing exceptional about that," the spokesman said.

'Dissident's life in danger in labour camp'

BEDING (AFP) — The family of dissident Peng Ming, serving an 18-month stint in labour camp, said Wednesday his life had been endangered by a lack of medical care. "Peng Ming is suffering from kidney stones and his life is in danger," his relatives told AFP in a faxed statement. "We are extremely worried and demand his immediate release." Peng, 42, is the founder of the environment and political China Development Union (CDU) group, which is based in Hong Kong but was banned in mainland China. Peng was arrested on Jan. 25 in a Beijing nightclub for allegedly visiting prostitutes, a charge he denied, and is currently being held in the Changping-Qiliq labour camp north of Beijing. The sentence of "re-education through labour" is an administrative punishment handed down without trial in China. Commonly used against dissidents, the punishment allows detention for up to three years. "The authorities say he has already received medical treatment and that his life is not in danger," said the statement from Peng's sister and father. It said Peng was under a particularly severe regime in the camp.

Opposition troops claim to have captured Bamiyan capital

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghanistan's beleaguered opposition captured the capital of central Bamiyan province on Wednesday, claiming its most significant victory in more than one year.

Taliban have since confirmed losing the city, but a spokesman, who didn't want to be identified said that the Taliban army was regrouping for a counteroffensive.

Opposition Shiite Muslim leader Haji Mohammed Mohaqeq, speaking in a satellite telephone interview from within the city, said "we are in complete control." It appears the airport,

which earlier had remained in Taliban hands, also had fallen to the opposition.

Fighting for Bamiyan has been intense in recent days with hundreds of refugees fleeing the region for the safety of Kabul, the Afghan capital.

Opposition soldiers entered Bamiyan from the south and Mobaqeq said the Taliban retreated in three different directions, south, east and north.

Hundreds of opposition soldiers launched their offensive late on Tuesday pounding Taliban positions throughout the night until they broke through Taliban defence lines and into the

city, said another opposition spokesman who gave his name only as Abdullah.

Bamiyan was the headquarters of the opposition alliance's Shiite Muslim partner, Hezb-e-Wahadat, until last year when the Taliban drove them out.

They have been trying for months to retake the area, famous for the giant standing Buddhas, which were reportedly undamaged in the fighting.

Mobaqeq, who is a senior commander in the Hezb-e-Wahadat Party, said at least 30 Taliban soldiers were killed and about 50 were taken prisoner, substantially less than claims by

Abdullah.

Most Taliban fighters escaped, he said.

Residents in the area reported heavy bombing by Taliban jets, said Abdullah, who was contacted by satellite telephone.

There were reports of ferocious fighting southeast of Bamiyan around Shash-e-Pul district, some 10 kilometres from the city.

Bamiyan is militarily strategic for the opposition because it enables them to put increased pressure on the Taliban north and south of the capital of Kabul.

It also is a significant psychological victory, especially for the opposition Shiite

Muslims, known as Hazaras in Afghanistan because of the region of the country they originally inhabited.

There were reports of atrocities committed by the Taliban against Hazaras last year when the Taliban took over the area, reports the Taliban vociferously denied.

Claims in Afghanistan's bitter an protracted war are difficult to confirm because of the remoteness of the area.

The Taliban rule roughly 90 per cent of Afghanistan with an iron hand imposing a harsh brand of Islamic, while the opposition, led by massoud and former presi-

dent Burhanuddin Rabbani rule the remaining 10 per cent.

Both opposition and Taliban soldiers also report heavy fighting in Afghanistan's northwestern Faryab province.

The United Nations has been urging the warring factions to renew peace efforts. However neither side appeared ready to negotiate.

The Taliban are insisting that their supreme leader mullah Mubammed Omar will lead any future government and the opposition has refused.

"We are ready to talk to the Taliban... but we won't surrender," said Abdullah.

NEWS IN BRIEF

McNamara warns against spreading the enemy

AFP — Former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, who served as the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, said Wednesday that the U.S. should not spread the enemy's tactics to the North. McNamara, who was in South Korea for a birthday celebration, said that the U.S. should not spread the enemy's tactics to the North. McNamara, who was in South Korea for a birthday celebration, said that the U.S. should not spread the enemy's tactics to the North.

and Pakistan spied on nuclear programme

AFP — India's nuclear programme has been spied on by the United States and Pakistan, according to a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

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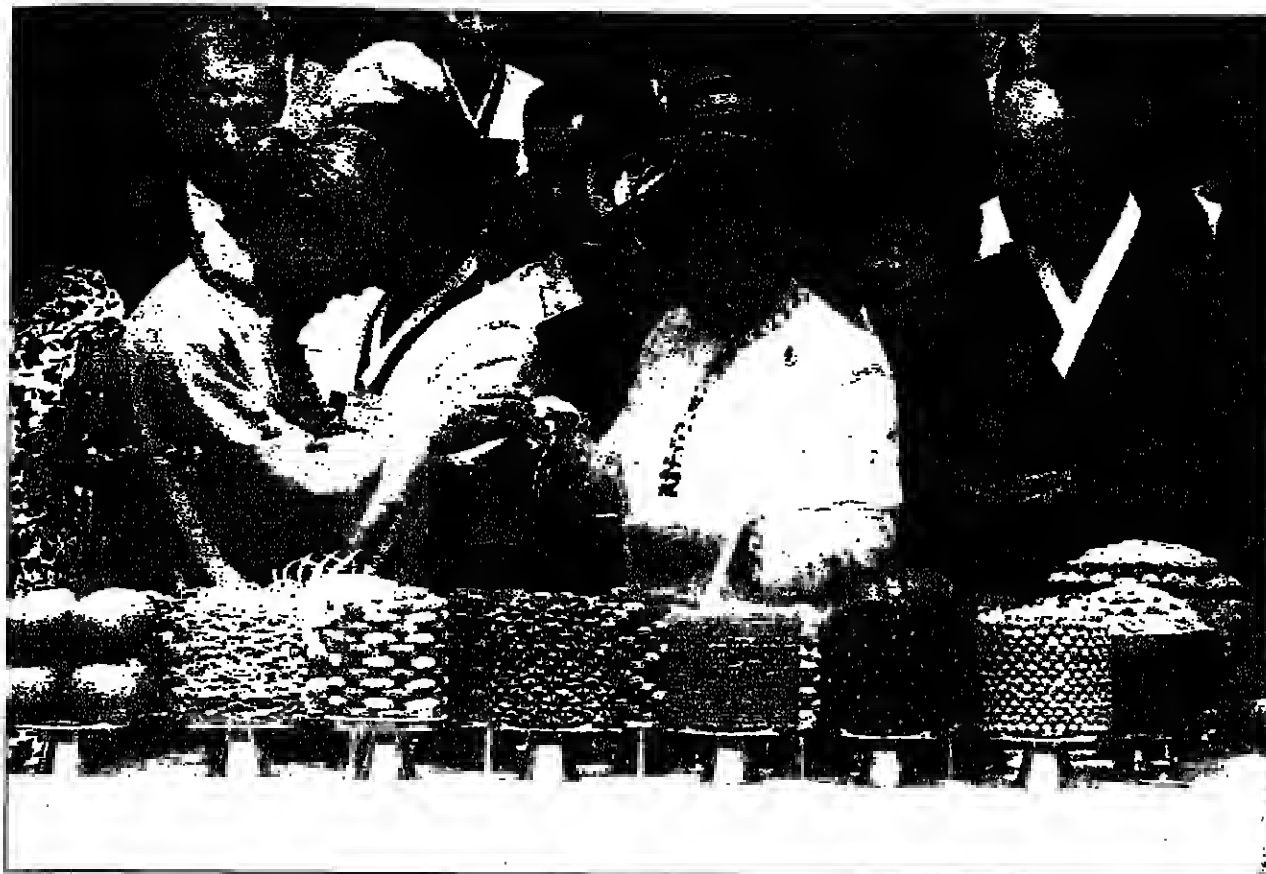
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With a birthday feast of rice cakes and fruit in front of them, Britain's Queen Elizabeth and a South Korean man toast their respective birthdays in the 400-year-old traditional village of Hahoe, near the city of Andong April 21. The queen, who celebrated her 73 birthday in the village, enjoyed watching a traditional Korean mask dance and toured the ancient village (Reuters photo)

Queen gets Korean birthday banquet fit for a king, makes cultural gaffe

HAHOE VILLAGE, South Korea (AFP) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her 73rd birthday in exotic style Wednesday with a banquet fit for a Korean king, despite committing an awkward cultural gaffe.

She fell foul of Korean social etiquette by failing to remove her footwear as she entered a dignitary's home in this picturesque hamlet southeast of Seoul, and had to be asked to go outside and remove her shoes.

The monarch, who usually spends her birthday privately with the royal family, was treated to a colourful local dance performance at which she was offered the birthday feast and sipped on traditional rice wine.

She also learned how to make kimchi, Korea's pungent national dish made from fermented cabbage, chillies and garlic during her morning visit.

"Does the birthday person eat all these?" the queen asked her guide as she inspected the 47-dish banquet spread once reserved for Korea's male sovereigns. "I don't know what all this is, but this is wonderful," she said staring at the dishes after a traditional mask dance in one of the country's last surviving ancient villages.

But the queen did not try the fare, set out on a wooden table in the grassy courtyard outside an old Korean house, opting instead for a cold lunch served on board the royal plane on her way back to the capital.

She did however take a sip of rice wine, or chugju, from a bronze goblet when one of the artists toasted her birthday.

Wearing a blue and white speckled dress, white jacket and blue hat, the queen smiled throughout a 10-minute dance in which artists, their faces hidden by the indigenous wooden masks, acted out a scene to the beat of drums.

The 800-year-old dance originated as a subtle and light-hearted way in which peasants could poke fun at the aristocratic masters.

The queen shook hands with and chatted to the artists after the show in Hahoe, 180 kilometres southeast of Seoul, a village of 255 residents dotted with a mixture of grass — and pagoda — roofed homes.

Before the birthday party, the monarch was invited into the home of a local aristocrat, Ryu Yong-Ha, whose family served Korea's kings until the abolition of the monarchy in 1910.

There, she learned the esoteric art of kimchi making and was invited into Ryu's wife's living room for tea after being barred access to her husband's men-only living quarters under the country's Confucian tradition.

But she unwittingly committed a social gaffe when entered the white-papered room and stepped on its yellow floor while still wearing her white pumps.

Moments later, members of the Ryu household and officials told the queen's aides she had broken the Asian rule that people should take off their footwear before going inside.

"The message was passed on and she then stepped back outside the room and took off her shoes before going back inside to sit down," said a photographer at the 400-year-old house.

The royal faux pas followed an incident on Tuesday night when the queen's husband, the 77-year-old Duke of Edinburgh, appeared to doze off during a state banquet hosted by President Kim Dae-Jung.

Hundreds of residents and visitors, most dressed in traditional Korean costumes, had gathered at Hahoe from dawn Wednesday to give their most prominent visitor the birthday of her life.

After the feast, she visited the ancient Bongjong Buddhist temple where the chief monk Moon-In beat a giant drum as he gave the queen a tour.

The visit by the queen, the first British head of state to visit here since the two countries established diplomatic ties in 1883, was aimed at allowing her a peek into the country's 5,000-year-old culture.

Later she is to be guest of honour at a special birthday concert of British and Korean music and dance, featuring British opera singer Lesley Garrett and broadcast live on Korean television.

Sonia Gandhi meets president, promises new government

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian opposition leader Sonia Gandhi met on Wednesday with Indian President K.R. Narayanan and announced that her Congress party would be ready to form a minority government in two days.

"The president called us to explore the possibilities of forming a government," a confident-sounding Gandhi told reporters outside the presidential palace.

"Within two days, we will bring the letters of (parliamentary) support," she said, adding that Congress was seeking to rule as a minority government, rather than lead a fresh coalition.

"The Congress party is wanting to form its own government with support from outside," India's Hindu nationalist coalition collapsed Saturday after losing a motion of confidence, paving the way for Congress, as the largest opposition party, to form an alternative administration.

Congress, which ruled India for 40 years after independence in 1947, has only 140 seats in the current 545-member parliament. The Hindu nationalist BJP party of outgoing Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, has 182 seats.

The Italian-born Gandhi said the president had asked her to prove the viability of any proposed government by bringing letters of support from other opposition parties.

If the president remains unconvinced, he may have no option other than to call a fresh general election — the third in three years.

Insisting that her party had already secured enough backing for a simple parliamentary majority, Gandhi said: "We are confident we will have more."

However, she declined to commit herself on whether she would take on the role of prime minister in a Congress government.

"It is a premature question. I don't believe in saying things before they happen," Congress leaders have made it clear that Gandhi would be their sole choice for prime minister.

Vajpayee's BJP party was quick to heap scorn on Gandhi's claim to have majority support in parliament.

"There could not be a more misleading statement. It's a blatant lie," said BJP Vice President K.L. Sharma.

"There is no chance of any alternative government coming into being," Sharma added.

A presidential spokesman said Narayanan would also consult leaders of other major political groups, including Vajpayee's BJP party, which has argued that it should be called back to power if Congress fails to produce an alternative.

In a rare show of public anger, Gandhi lashed out at charges levelled by Vajpayee's party that the Congress had purchased the votes of several MPs in order to defeat the government's confidence motion on Saturday.

"It is a BJP habit to accuse others of doing what they indulge in," she said.

Congress has struggled over the past three days to secure the numbers it needs to replace the Vajpayee government.

Although opposition parties united in defeating the government at the weekend, traditional rivalries quickly surfaced when their respective leaders got down to the nitty-gritty of forging a credible replacement.

At the same time as Gandhi was meeting the president, a key centrist party with 20 MPs in parliament withheld unconditional support for a Congress government.

"We won't extend support to anyone blindfolded," Socialist Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav said, adding that Gandhi had failed to consult him or his party over her proposals for a new government.

"If Congress has staked its claim all alone, what can I do? If somebody goes and stakes claim without meeting or consulting us, what can we do?"

Yadav said the Congress would have to spell out its economic policies before seeking his party's backing.

Meanwhile, about a dozen BJP MPs staged a noisy anti-Gandhi protest outside parliament, saying her foreign background should exclude her from becoming premier.

"Person of foreign origin, go back" and "Sonia go back, down with Rome Raj," they shouted.

Some 500 Bangladeshis ill after inhaling ammonia

NARSINGDI, Bangladesh (R) — At least 500 people have fallen ill after inhaling ammonia leaking from a fertiliser factory in Bangladesh's narsingdi district, police and officials said on Wednesday.

They said the gas, which had been leaking from Ghorashal Fertiliser Complex (GFC) at palash since late March, had killed nearly 1,500 fowls and 20 head of cattle, along with fish in nearby ponds and crops in the fields.

"The GFC managed by state-owned Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) released excess ammonia into its immediate neighbourhood," police superintendent Mohammed Mokhelesur Rahman said.

A government official at Palash, 100 km northeast of the capital Dhaka, said many villagers had fled.

"We have treated several people with lung and breathing problems along with coughing and sneezing," said a doctor at Narsingdi government hospital.

"Fifty such patients are still with us," the doctor said, adding that the cases had started coming in over the past 15 days. M.A. Samad, director, production and research of BCIC, blamed a long-running drought for the "excessive evaporation of ammonia from its treatment unit."

He said the leakage had begun in the second half of March but did not say whether it had been plugged.

"The drought and excessive environmental heat impaired the capacity of the treatment plant from where the ammonia evaporated and caused pollution," Samad told Reuters by telephone.

"The authorities are assessing the damages," he said, adding that affected villagers would be compensated.

Samad said the amount of compensation was still under consideration. The GFC produces 0.4 million tonnes of urea annually. Bangladesh's annual requirement for urea is 2.2 million tonnes, agriculture ministry officials said.

Arrest of Rwandan 'genocidal' bishop splits Burundi clergy

BUJUMBURA (AFP) — Burundian Roman Catholic priests on Tuesday criticised their top bishop for expressing solidarity with Rwandan colleagues after one was arrested on genocide charges.

Burundian Episcopal conference chief Simon Ntamwana "was dishonest in committing the clergy (in Burundi) to solidarity with a genocide suspect," one priest who asked not to be named told AFP.

"I am a priest, am not part of the hierarchy of the Catholic church, but that hierarchy represents us in its theological and moral stances at the educational level," he said.

Another priest, who also withheld his name, on Friday said that the bishop of Gikongoro in southwest Rwanda, arrested last week and accused of playing a local part in the 1994 slaughter of more than 500,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus, should face trial.

Last Friday, Bishop Ntamwana published a statement in the name of Burundi's Roman Catholic church expressing the "great surprise (with which) the bishop's conference have learned of the arrest of Bishop Augustin Misago."

"We express our moral and spiritual support to all the bishops" in Rwanda, the statement added. Later in the day, the anonymous priest told AFP that Misago must face "the accusations weighing against him, for which he is solely responsible, and he should plead his case without the clergy being obliged to show solidarity with him."

Clerics in Burundi's central Gitega province boycotted a visit there last week by Rwanda's Hutu President Pasteur Bizimungu, whose arrival in Bujumbura last Thursday on an official trip was also pointedly ignored by the papal nuncio and the bishop of the capital.

The general secretary of the Episcopal Conference, Gabriel Barengsabab, told AFP that the church hierarchy "never consults" priests on decisions such as the declaration from Ntamwana.

"Priests are free to think what they want," he said.

Misago was arrested on April 14, the public prosecutor's office said in the Rwandan capital Kigali. He was taken to a police station in the capital after being seized at the papal nuncio's residence.

In a subsequent letter to the prosecutor, Rwanda's eight other bishops said that Misago suffers from high blood pressure and that "his condition is likely to deteriorate seriously in preventive detention."

"There is no fear that Monsignor Misago will flee," said the letter, made available to AFP, adding that the whole church hierarchy in Rwanda "makes a solemn undertaking to ensure that this does not happen."

Misago is accused of complicity in the disappearance of 30 girls who had sought sanctuary from Hutu extremist killers in 1994.

The Gikongoro killings were raised on April 7 by Bizimungu during ceremonies to mark the fifth anniversary of the massacre of up to 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus between April and July 1994.

"Even if his innocence ends up being proved, we will ask the Vatican to rid us of this man, that he be sent away from Rwanda so that our society can be purged of this bishop in whom the faithful no longer have confidence," Bizimungu said.

The Vatican last week issued a strong protest at the arrest of Misago, stating that it was an "extremely serious matter which damages not only the church in Rwanda, but the whole Catholic church."

Rights groups have already questioned the role of the church during the Rwandan genocide, which ended when then rebels of the mainly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) seized control of Kigali. RPF troops have since been accused of reprisal atrocities.

N. Korea counters nuclear pressure with weapons charge against Seoul

SEOUL (AFP) — Communist North Korea on Wednesday reacted to pressure to halt developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons by turning the charges on rival South Korea.

Pyongyang lambasted Seoul for its "frantic moves" to develop and store the deadly arms "in collusion" with the United States.

The Korean National Peace Committee issued a statement saying Seoul was channelling "exorbitant" amounts of money into the schemes to "increase their own strong capabilities of bio-chemical warfare."

In addition, the claims relayed by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Seoul has asked Washington to transfer technology for producing "new types of bacteriological and poisonous agents."

"In this way they seek to inflict upon the fellow countrymen dreadful disasters of bio-chemical warfare as well as calamities of thermonuclear war, banking on the U.S. imperialists' anti-North Korea war moves," it said.

It claimed that South Korea was the "world's biggest arsenal of weapons of mass destruction where not only various kinds of nuclear shells and bombs including neutron bombs but also biological and chemical weapons are massively stockpiled."

It called U.S. assertions that the North is developing chemical and biological weapons "groundless," saying they were aimed at "stifling" the Stalinist state.

Washington and Seoul have warned Pyongyang they will not tolerate the development of weapons of mass destruction which threaten the security of the Northeast Asian region.

In 1994 North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear programme in return for desperately-needed food and energy aid.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab national daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.
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Web Site: <http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/>

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

An historic visit

HIS MAJESTY King Abdullah's official visit to Damascus for talks with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad has been rightly hailed as historic, turning in an entirely new page in Jordanian-Syrian relations.

Our mutual history is well-known. We do not have to see eye-to-eye on every issue, which we do not. But respect for our divergent views, with dialogue as a means to resolve points of difference, should be the cornerstone of our new era.

The visit of the Monarch and his high-ranking delegation to Syria is anything but ceremonial. The King's principal aim is obviously to breathe new life into Jordanian-Syrian relations on more than one front as a prelude to achieving Arab unity and solidarity and setting the relationship on an equal footing, based on respect.

By emphasising Jordan's Arab roots and links with the Arab World as a centerpiece of Jordan's future strategy, the King is making it loud and clear where his Kingdom's interests lie.

This strategic goal has been given prominence in the King's determination to strengthen Jordan's relations. The Kingdom obviously wants to be a link in a fertile crescent cooperation linking Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. On another front, Jordan has already cemented solid and sustainable relations with Gulf states. Having already visited Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Libya, the King's vision is undoubtedly noble. The Monarch will soon visit other Arab countries including Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Yemen, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria before holding talks with President Bill Clinton in Washington next month. This says a lot about the thinking and priorities of the King.

Damascus has already hailed the King's visit as an Arab victory and welcomed most warmly and sincerely his talks with the Syrian president. To be sure there are many issues that have been discussed and hopefully resolved. Not least are the issues of Jordanian prisoners, the construction of the Al Wihdeh (Unity) dam on the Yarmouk River, economic ties and the reactivation of the Jordanian-Syrian committee which has been dormant for far too long.

Clearly the stalled peace process on the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese fronts have figured very highly in the talks. Syria has stated its stand on Jordan and King Abdullah. When President Assad calls King Abdullah "our dear son" and commits his country to standing "strongly" by Jordan, we are more assured that the future of Jordanian-Syrian relations will be brighter.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh's complaint about the official media is supported by many factors. Rawabdeh said that the media should not only represent the state but also the nation — a point of view that is supported by the majority of people, added Rimawi. Media officials, who also agree with Rawabdeh, could not do much to conduct changes, as media departments are not completely under the authority of information ministers, according to the writer. The prime minister did well by announcing the need for a review of Jordan's media, not only to compete with counterparts, but also to enjoy political support as any review requires a political decision, argued Rimawi, who concluded that nowadays, the media has become a commercial industry, and the best way to convey political messages.

Al Dustour's editorial commented on His Majesty King Abdullah's historic visit to Syria, saying the trip will launch a new stage in joint relations. Observers are extremely concerned about King Abdullah's trip, which comes as part of efforts to strengthen inter-Arab relations, as talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad are expected to create integrated coordination and cooperation, added the editorial. In fact, regardless of some media reports that there are certain misunderstandings between the two neighbours, this has not minimised the significance of the two leaderships' concern about developing cooperation, said the newspaper. King Abdullah and the Syrian leadership have always expressed their utmost concern to strengthen and deepen bilateral ties. Thus, observers watching the two countries will note that the indications are that Jordan and Syria are moving towards rebuilding their relations on a firm basis, concluded the paper.

Teachers, students and destiny

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

DO TEACHERS influence the lives of students? Yes, teachers do definitely and absolutely influence students. When? At all ages and in all stages, from kindergarten to Ph.D. level.

You see, teachers are in a very privileged position, one more privileged than many think. Teachers — like Friday Imams, Sunday ministers and TV presenters, and unlike politicians, writers, salesmen, and almost everybody else who has to compete for others' attention — are guaranteed an audience and are guaranteed attention.

They are given a podium, a stage, space, privacy and remarkable independence and freedom. In many ways, the sky is the limit in terms of options. Nobody interferes, "in a seriously obstructive way in how the class is conducted. Teachers, on the whole, enjoy a tremendous sense of authority. Of course there are some limits, and of course the role of the teacher has changed dramatically over the years (curtailed in many ways). Teachers are not preachers. They have to share the podium with students; they have to listen a lot, let

students speak a lot; they have to de-centre themselves a bit.

Nevertheless, and no matter how ultra-modern your class is, students expect teachers to know, to possess a valuable experience, to have an interesting perspective on things, and to be role models. Students anytime, anywhere look up to teachers. This is especially true in our own culture.

The influence comes in degrees, and it takes different forms. Some teachers influence all students, some many, some some, some a few, some few, and some hardly any. Some teachers influence students remarkably, some substantially, some humbly, and some hardly at all. Some teachers influence students positively; some negatively. Some influence directly, some indirectly.

While the audience is guaranteed, in other words, the influence is not necessarily guaranteed. Influence is not automatic. Teachers have to work at it. The harder they work on themselves, their knowledge, their approaches and their personality, the greater the degree of influence is.

One thing, however, is sure: the

potential of influence is always there. You never know when you say something that can turn students' lives (or the lives of some, even the life of one) 180 degrees.

Two things happened this past week that confirmed my faith in the profession. You see, the problem with teaching is that the influence is not always speedily and visibly felt. There are moments when you wonder whether you are actually making an impact. Influencing students is not like manufacturing a car, a toy or any other concrete object. With many students (the silent majority) you do not even know where you stand. Students' evaluations of teachers are suggestive, the way they look at you in class is suggestive, and what they say to you at times is most often indicative. Nevertheless, you always keep wondering whether you are making the impact you wish to make or not. Influence in this particular case is generally long-term and abstract.

Anyhow, two things happened this past week. A former student of mine whom I taught some ten years ago stopped by. He is in the

matic ways — positively, I hope.

The same thing had happened to me, of course — and to a vast majority of people. My own life has changed dramatically as a result of some remarks — said to me personally or generally to students — by some of my former teachers, inside or outside class. I do not know what my life would have been like had I not been taught by a handful of teachers in particular, to whom I am greatly indebted and whose influence I have come to know, understand and appreciate as time went by.

Teachers, like preachers and all other individuals who stand to address an audience, have ample opportunities of influence. There is the potential for a great impact, not only in terms of spreading information and knowledge but also in terms of changing students' personalities and forging their destinies and fates. Teachers, depending on how seriously they take their calling and how ably they conduct themselves, can make all the difference in a person's life. They, as an Arab poet has astutely put it, are almost like prophets.

Of holidays and time zones

Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttab

IF YOU live in Jerusalem you will certainly find a problem making an appointment. The moment you take out your diary to record a meeting you will run into one scheduling problem after the other. I am often lost when I get requests to make appointments a couple of months before the target time. For the most part I refuse to agree to such encounters that far in advance because one can't make such plans in this part of the world. I have yet to find a diary that contains all the religious and national holidays that affect people in this region.

In addition to the unexpected problems that can occur because of the political situation there are more basic problems like which day of the week it is and by which time clock one is going by.

Depending on who and where the meeting is, four days a week are out.

Thursdays and Fridays are official holidays in many Palestinian governmental and non-governmental institutions. Al Quds University which has campuses in Jerusalem, Abu Dis and Ramallah is off these days and so is Al Najah University. Bethlehem University takes Saturdays and Sundays off while Bir Zeit University like many private schools in the Jerusalem area declare Fridays and Sundays off.

In addition to the regular weekly holidays one has to contend with a host of religious and political holidays. Last Saturday for example, which is usually a working day for

Palestinians was a holiday because it was the Muslim New Year. This is the year 1420 since the Hijra of the Prophet Mohammad from Mecca to Medina.

But for Palestinians the most difficult of these holidays are Israeli and Jewish holidays. Normally, Palestinians would not care when Israel celebrates its independence or when the Jewish holidays occur. But in recent years, knowing these days has become very important because the Israeli army, without much prior warning declares a hermetic closure on the Palestinian territories on these days as they did this week when they closed the territories from Monday night until Thursday. Most people remember Israel's independence as having taken place on the same day that the British mandate withdrew from Palestine, May 15, 1948. But this as well as all other Jewish holidays are remembered according to

the Jewish calendar which no Palestinian knows how works or when these holidays are expected.

Time is also a problem. Israel sprung its clock one hour forward on April 1. The Palestinian National Authority changed to summer time on April 15.

Jordan has decided this year not to change its clock. For those living in Jerusalem during the first two weeks on April every appointment had to be checked whether it is according to Israeli time or Palestinian time. A major east Jerusalem hotel removed the main clock over the reception counter so as to avoid deciding which time to go by.

All this goes to show the difficulties and confusion for those living in Jerusalem and the vast gap in basic information about issues as simple as holidays and time zones. For the time being, my appointments are often made with the help of the directory of PASTA — the Palestinian Academic Society for the study of International Affairs.

Monday night, I was forced to travel to give a ride to a friend who has a valid travel permit to Jerusalem because the closure imposed on the Palestinian territories left many Palestinians stranded. While it would be nice when we will not have to worry about the unannounced closures by the Israeli authorities. In the meantime I hope that someone will be able to print a diary that can include all relevant holidays for those of us living in Jerusalem.

Letters to the editor

Fair reporting, please!

I REGRET to have to respond to your editorial, April 19, entitled, "Many ways to mark Earth Day." It contained misinformation directed at the domestic market and population and at the export markets of the Jordan Valley produce.

I find myself in disagreement with your claims regarding irrigation water of the Jordan Valley where you say, "Fruits and vegetables still feed on highly polluted water and remain without the close scrutiny of the ministries of health and agriculture." For one thing, this statement is only partly true for some dry seasons when the King Talal Dam does not get filled, and for another, its polluted water is used to irrigate a portion of the middle Jordan Valley (DA 23 - DA 30 inclusive). The rest of the Jordan Valley (DA 1-23, DA 31-44) in the north and in the southern Ghors is irrigated with high quality irrigation water. The total area of the lands affected by partial irrigation from the King Talal Dam does not exceed 5500 hectares compared to some 30,000 hectares irrigated in the Valley. Besides, fruits and vegetables are irrigated in the Plateau with high quality irrigation water at a total area of another 30,000 hectares. That is, the partial irrigation with polluted water does not cover more than 8.5 per cent of Jordan's irrigated lands. It is totally unfair to leave the impression that Jordan's fruits and vegetables are irrigated with highly polluted water. Such false claims have impacted heavy losses on Jordanian farmers. The export markets, especially those of the Gulf states, have been victims to such falsehoods, and left them closed to Jordanian produce, but open to fruits and vegetables from Turkey, Greece and Lebanon. We admit that Jordanian traders are benefiting from the shift in the source of fruits and vegetables to the Gulf markets, but their number is so insignificant compared to the Jordanian producers that have suffered because of the shift. At no time did a box of tomatoes in January, produced in the wonderful environment of the Southern Ghors, sell for only JD 0.40 like it did this past January. This return was barely enough to pay for the picking, packaging and transport, let alone the rest of the cost of production. The usual price in the month of January, before the export market was unjustifiably closed, reached ten times that value. Do you see the scale of the impact of irresponsible claims and their publication? Besides, your claim about irrigation water falling far below international standards failed to name what standards are the base, and how the Jordanian irrigation water is below them.

The other false claim rests in your statement, "The heavily polluted water that was pumped to our homes last summer may have stirred." In such a claim, I have noticed that the Jordan Times has been acting like a parrot that echoes the false reporting of other Arabic dailies. I dare presume that this is a reference to the "political dance" of last summer that claimed pollution in the water pumped to West Amman last summer. Would it surprise you to know the facts? I suppose you should seek them and not wait for a reader to list them for you. But, since you chose to adopt the reporting of a misleading, politically motivated campaign, it may serve you to know that the water pumped to West Amman last summer, and despite false claims to the contrary, has never been polluted. Some, including your own junior reporters, may be forced to defend their translations of last summer, but the fact remains that pollution never occurred. We have Jordanian (Specs 287 for the year 1997) and international specifications (WHO guidelines, 1996) as referees. We also have professional review reports from WHO specialists, specialists from the U.S. (two consulting firms), and from Germany that support the fact I am reporting. In the presence of legal and documentary evidence, there should be no room for speculation and unfounded journalistic claims.

West Amman is served from the King Abdullah Canal via the Zai Treatment Plant at the rate of 120 thousand cubic metres per day of which about 20,000 go to Salt, Zai and Fuheis. Water pumped to West Amman thus constitutes about 9 per cent of the municipal water serviced to the population of the Kingdom.

Suppose that your claims are, God forbid, correct; is it fair to label the water that was pumped to our houses, meaning the houses of the population of Jordan, as "heavily polluted"? Have you heard of any case admitted to a hospital or even reported by a clinic or doctor to the Ministry of Health attributed to any kind of water pollution?

Finally, I hope that the Jordan Times lives up to the role it is viewed to have in the Jordan press establishment, and to be both honest and kind to the country and its interests in a transparent manner. Claims like the ones I cited are detrimental to the lives of the farmers who lost their export markets for no good reason, and to the population who were scared for only political gains. Or does it take a court order to restrain the wild papers from publishing false claims of the above type? This is not fair at all.

Dr. Munther J Haddadin
 Amman

Palestine economy turns around

BEHIND THE political headlines and the dramatic announcements concerning statehood, and Israeli rebuffs, threats, and electioneering bluster, the economy of Palestine seems to be turning around.

Though accurate up-to-date figures are not that easy to come by, the few indicators we have suggest that the twin problems of massive unemployment and falling national income may be easing. Palestinian GDP is estimated to have risen in 1998 by about two per cent. This is obviously not earthshattering, but compared to say 1996's increase of just above zero, things are looking better. Like Jordan, however, high population growth coupled with a still weak economy means that GDP per capita in Palestine is still dropping. Also like Jordan, slow growth and other factors leave the Palestinian economy with lots of people out of work, despite falls in the unemployment level from at least twenty per cent in 1997 to a figure somewhere in the teens last year. (Palestinians' workers' remittances from abroad rose in 1998, another piece of good news.)

There is no pretending that everything in Palestine is fine, as the partial listing of woes will show.

Israeli inflation levels have a major effect on the Palestinians. This is not some kind of wicked conspiracy, just a reflection of the very close links between the economies of Palestine and Israel. The latter has suffered from recurring bouts of inflation over the past few decades; and when prices go up in Tel Aviv, they also tend to climb in Gaza and Jericho. Things have been slightly better lately as far as Israel's price rises are concerned, with the excessive inflation of the 1980s seemingly a thing of the past. Still, a lot of Palestine's inflation is imported from Israel.

At the same time, the Palestinian economy suffers from Israeli policies of closure and confinement practised against Palestine's workers. Nevertheless, Israel is obviously in need of Palestinian labour, so despite short-term obstacles, this demand will have a positive impact on Palestine's economy if and when the political issues are sorted out.

Yet again like Jordan, Palestine's exports are vastly outstripped by imports.

(In fact, Jordan's trade deficit looks small compared to the Palestinian one.) Most imports come from Israel, and the majority of exports go there. The Palestinian economy, in its infancy, is still clearly dependent on foreign assistance. With such aid come various kinds of corruption. Nobody is denying that Palestine still requires a lot of help, it's just that the country also needs fewer crooks.

The list of things wrong with Palestine's economic growth and development is unfortunately longer even than this. Nevertheless, some sectors have done well, particularly last year. Banking for example has boomed. The number of Palestinian banks rose to nine in 1998 from two in 1994, while Arab and foreign banks operating in Palestine went up from five in the year to thirteen in 1998. The total number of banks was thus 22 in 1998, with 105 branches in 1998, compared to 38 branches in 1994. Total banking system assets grew by 15 per cent in 1998, up from \$2,907 million in the previous year to \$3,337 million. Credit facilities rose 36 per cent, from \$613 million at end 1997 to \$833 million a year later, with customer deposits increasing by 16 per cent in 1998.

In fact, banking had been doing reasonably well even before last year. Three new banks had opened in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in 1997 to bring the number of operating banks there to nineteen at the end of that year. The number of branches had then reached 80, with 53 in the West Bank and 27 in Gaza.

Associated with the expansion of banking and other sectors (mainly tourism, which is gearing up for the Year 2000 celebrations) has been a good performance by the construction business. However, the building isn't just of banks and hotels, as shown for example by the start of construction of the \$8.2 million Arab Markets Plaza project in Al Bireh. The actual amount pumped into the economy as a result of this project is probably going to be a lot higher, thanks to a piece of economic theory called the income multiplier. The arithmetic for this can be compli-

Developing World



Riad al Khouri

cated, and depends on several things including how much of the new income coming into the economy goes to savings and imports. You can safely say though that the total benefit to Palestine in general and Al Bireh in particular is going to be more than double the initial investment. Al Bireh is not a big city, and even a fraction of say \$20 million ending up in its residents' pockets is a good thing.

However, you can't please everybody. Such projects, as well as bank expansion, may actually upset some people. From what I have seen or heard of some of the Palestinian "opposition," particularly those living outside the region, most of their economic ideas are out of touch with the realities of Palestinian life.

These people, some of whom are well-meaning, want "better" or "more productive" investment instead of banks and shopping centres. Most of these arguments are false, with steel factories being preferred to luxury hotels and cottage industries based on hand looms seen as superior to bank branches. Such economic ideas are clouded by sentiment and impressions. Behind these thoughts and the negative criticism they mask, the Palestinian economy may after all be starting to get on its feet. Nobody is claiming that a supermarket here and a new bank there are miraculously going to cure the economic woes of Palestinians. The process of development in Palestine remains a long and hard one, but it looks like the worst of the economic crisis of the past few years just might be over.

هذا ما نحن فيه

Number of journalists killed in line of duty fall, but observers detect worrying trend

To mark the Ninth International Press Freedom Day on May 3, 1999, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) is publishing its 1999 Annual Report. The Annual Report will be available on request and readable on RSF web site (www.rsffr.fr) from May 3, 1999.

THE NUMBER of journalists killed in the course of their work or because of their profession continued to fall in 1998. Reporters Sans Frontières recorded only 19, compared to 26 the previous year, 51 in 1995 (including 22 in Algeria) and 103 in 1994 (including 48 in Rwanda and 18 in Algeria). Our figure is significantly lower than those given by other international organisations. That is because we only count those cases in which we are certain, after an investigation, that the victims' work as journalists was the sole reason they were murdered.

However, this relatively low figure conceals a worrying trend. Those 19 journalists did not die while covering armed conflicts, as has often been the case in the past. Almost all those who lost their lives in 1998 were killed because they had revealed or were investigating corruption, or ties between governments and organised crime. This was what happened in Bangladesh (1 journalist killed), Brazil (1), Colombia (4), Mexico (1), Philippines (1), Russia (2) and Thailand (1). Russian journalist Larissa Yudina, for instance, was murdered as she was investigating embezzlement by the president of the autonomous republic of Kalmykia. In this type of case, the killers are seldom identified, and even more seldom punished. To take another example: In Argentina,

the legal investigation of the murder of photographer José Luis Cabezas of the magazine Noticias, shot dead on Jan. 25, 1997, ended without the people behind the killing or their motives being identified, even though eight people are behind bars for their part in the crime.

Violence against the press is not perpetrated only by governments. While in Turkey, the state is the main culprit in assaults on journalists (80 per cent are committed by the police), in Russia the weakening of law and order compared to Soviet days has led to the "privatisation" of violence. Crumbling central power has been replaced by criminal organisations made up of financial magnates, arms dealers and ambitious, unscrupulous politicians. In southern Asia, journalists may become victims of those whose activities they are reporting, such as political parties and their supporters, and of attacks by separatist or terrorist groups.

The number of journalists in prison, either serving sentences or awaiting trial, changed little compared to previous years. About 100 were behind bars on Jan. 1, 1999, and another 487 were arrested and held for shorter or longer periods during 1998. The worst offenders are still the same, with China and Ethiopia vying for the record of keeping most journalists in jail. Next on the list come Syria, Burma and Turkey. A total of 25 countries throw journalists into prison for offences that may or may not be officially recognised. The case of Syrian Nizar Nayyuf, sentenced to ten years in 1992, is a telling example. Although he is suffering from cancer and the after-effects of torture, the military

authorities have made it clear he will only be given medical treatment if he admits he made "false statements about human rights in Syria" and promises to give up his political activities. China takes a similar attitude. Gao Yu, arrested in October 1993 and serving a six-year sentence at Beijing's No. 2 prison for "revealing state secrets," has also been subjected to official blackmail. Although her health deteriorated in 1998, the government says she will only be released if she confesses her "mistakes" and publicly criticises herself.

Syria and Turkey are ahead of the field when it comes to journalists tortured while in detention, but they are not the only countries where the "forces of law and order" resort to atrocious brutality to gag the free press. In all, 697 journalists were threatened or assaulted in 1998.

Even in countries where restrictions in the media sector have been eased, broadcasters are all too often controlled by governments, which regard them as having the biggest influence on public opinion. No fewer than 75 countries maintain a state monopoly on television, and 45 are trying to slow down the communications revolution by limiting citizens' access to the Internet. In Asia this is happening in communist countries such as China or Vietnam, and under the military dictatorship in Burma and the authoritarian government of Malaysia. Beijing sentenced a web surfer to two years' imprisonment for supplying e-mail addresses to dissident publications based in the United States. Hanoi still refuses to allow private Internet service providers to operate, Rangoo passes jail sentences of several years

'Almost all those who lost their lives in 1998 were killed because they had revealed or were investigating corruption'

on anyone who fails to declare ownership of a computer and Kuala Lumpur has been trying desperately to censor web sites that oppose Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad. More generally, 501 publications, TV channels and radio stations were victims of repression in 1998, according to Reporters Sans Frontières' research.

Many countries maintain "publishing false information" and "insulting the head of state" in their arsenal of legislation as weapons in the repression of the free press. Other countries systematically take journalists to court for "libel." Croatia, which became a member of the Council of Europe in 1996, offers one of the worst examples of misusing legislation to restrict press freedom. Journalists from the satirical weekly Feral Tribune had further proof of this in 1998, when the newspaper had to pay a total of \$2.4 million

in fines for various offences of "libel" or "insulting the authority of the state." About 600 similar cases are still pending against Croatian journalists, most of them brought by people close to President Franjo Tudjman. Rebellion and civil war are sometimes used as pretexts for governments to "clean up" the media and get rid of journalists who upset them. This is what has happened in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Elsewhere, the possibility of declaring a "state of emergency" may be used to silence dissenting voices in the name of "state security."

In 1998, sub-Saharan Africa was the world region where most journalists had to leave their home countries. Many fled to Europe or North America for fear of reprisals or because they had been threatened. Cameroon and Sierra Leone are without doubt the countries worst hit in this regard. Fear of imprisonment in Yaoundé or Douala and the danger of being sentenced to death for "collaborating with the military junta" in Freetown are the reasons mentioned most frequently by journalists for going into exile. Two journalists also had to leave Cuba, one for France, the other for the United States, in order to escape prison.

The various events held to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December 1998 gave international leaders the chance for fine words and fresh undertaking on human rights and the building of a fairer world. Yet even today, article 19, like the rest of the declaration, is only really respected in about 30 democratic countries with fewer than a billion inhabitants. In 30 other countries, home to two million men and women, human rights and basic

freedoms are trodden underfoot by authoritarian regimes. Between those two extremes, another two billion people must make do with partial or conditional freedom. Despite the many pacts, charters, conventions as solemn statements that have confirmed and expanded on article 19 in the past half-century, freedom of expression and the free flow of information are still the subject of severe repression all over the world.

But there was some good news in 1998. In Hong Kong a year and a half after the retrocession of the former British colony to China, the state of press freedom is not giving too much cause for concern, although some journalists in the Special Administrative Region say there has been an increase in self-censorship, the scale of which is naturally hard to assess. The most radical change occurred in Indonesia in May, when General Suharto resigned after 32 years of absolute power and almost as many of repression of the media. On January 1, 1999, there were no more Indonesian journalists in prison, about 100 new publications had been launched and the government had promised to introduce legislation to guarantee press freedom. Sometimes a change of leader is sufficient to put an end to years of systematic repression of the media: since the death of Sani Abacha in Nigeria, in June 1998, ten or more journalists have been released from jail. Others, who had fled the country to escape imprisonment, have been able to return to their jobs and write more freely than they have for a long time.

— Reporters Sans Frontières press release

Towering CDs

By Jean-Claude Elias

chip talk

AMONG THE countless CD-ROM titles available for the education, the entertainment or the information of PC users, the most truly useful ones are those that belong to the so-called "reference" series. The dictionaries and encyclopaedias constitute the core of the series, but other titles like "Music Central" and "Musical Instruments" by Microsoft are also very popular. The first is a comprehensive reference work on modern music — pop, variety and rock. The second is a superb window open on the world of instruments from all over the world, including high quality sound samples and of course photographs.

In the "dictionaries and encyclopaedias" set I would mention "Bookshelf", "Encarta", the "Britannica", "Cinemania", the excellent "Hachette-Oxford" language translation titles and the "Random House Dictionary" to name only a few. In my personal library, I counted twelve such discs.

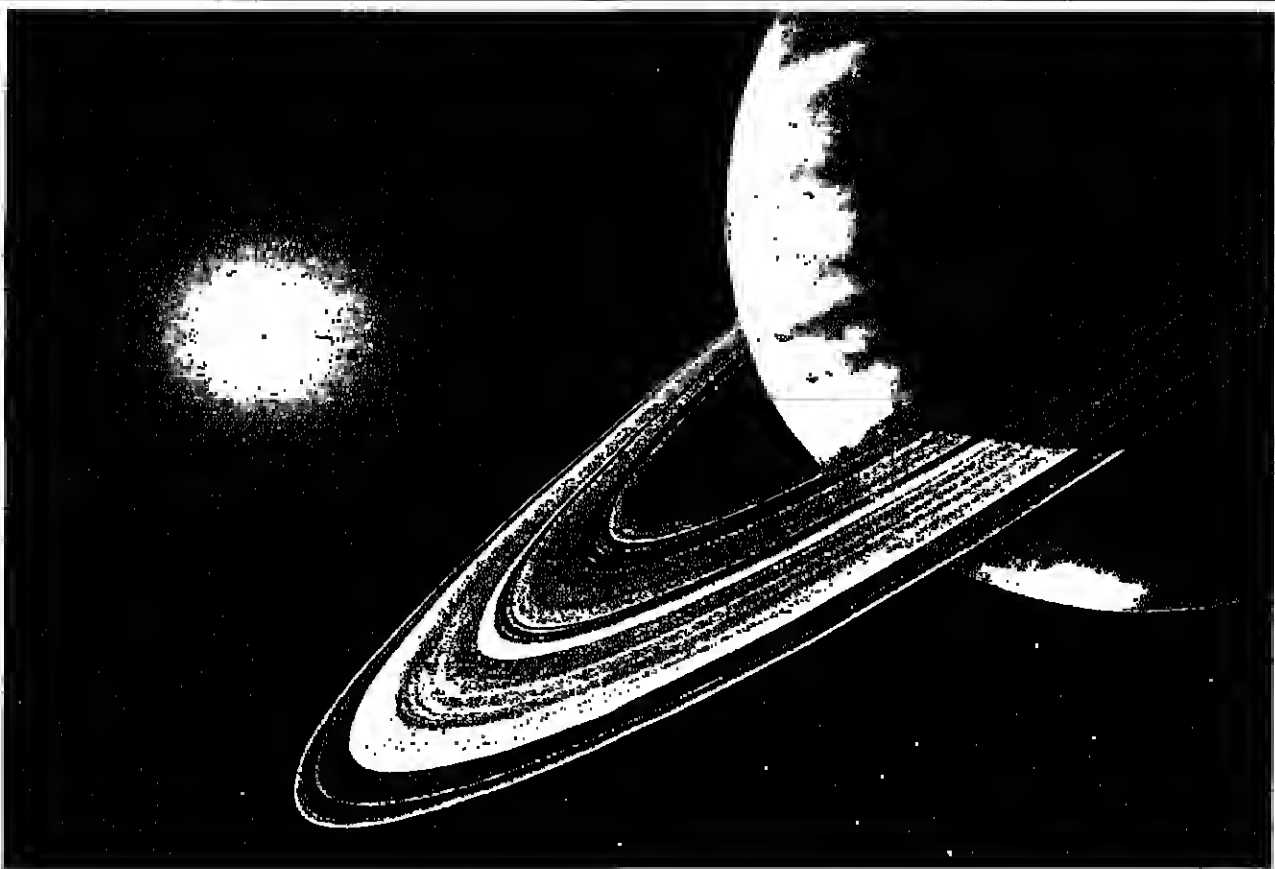
The main interest in owning reference CD titles is having them instantly available, a mouse click away. Having to look for a disc under your bed, insert it in the CD drive and then activate it, defeats the purpose and ruins the fun. So what do you do when 99 per cent of PCs are fitted with only one CD drive? If you have a large hard disk, 6 GB and above, you may consider installing or copying the whole contents of the two or three CD titles that you use most often, permanently onto your hard disk. They will eat some substantial hard disk space, but chances are there'll be plenty left for other types of files and programmes. This way the contents of these precious CDs will always be at your fingertips. Another advantage of this method is that access time to the information will be faster than from the CD itself. However not all CD titles will allow you to do this. Some of them will not work unless the original CD disc is actually present in the CD drive. This is a protection scheme against illegal copying. With such titles, placing the whole contents onto the hard disk would be useless.

Another solution, which also solves the above copy protection problem, is to install multiple CD drives. The price in Amman of a typical drive has fallen to about JD65, which is almost the same as an original CD title. Adding one or two units to an existing system therefore makes sense. What was expensive a few years ago is now perfectly feasible, and most PC cabinets can easily hold two drives.

Those who are more demanding can acquire CD towers. Featuring five, ten or even more drives, these stand-alone units are connected to the main PC and provide a huge on-line source of information, a complete reference library. With a CD tower, the cost per drive is drastically reduced.

The same concept applies to the newer DVD drives that hold about 6 times more data than CDs. A DVD tower — not yet on the market — will theoretically provide tens of gigabytes of information for instant reference. It could be here as early as next year.

Jean-Claude Elias can be reached by e-mail at jeanclaud@nets.com.jo



An artist's rendition of Upsilon Andromedae System where astronomers Tim Brown, National Centre for Atmospheric Research, Robert Noyes, professor of Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics, Debra Fischer, post-doctoral researcher of San Francisco State University, Geoffrey Marcy, professor of San Francisco State University, and R. Paul Butler, astronomer, Anglo-Australian Observatory, discovered the first multiple planets found around a sun-like star system (AFP Photo)

Jordanian doctor wins prize for 'remarkable achievement'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordanian urologist Akram Dajani this month won "the Prize of the President of Algeria in Medicine" for the best original medical academic work or research by an Arab doctor.

A practising urologist and former professor at the University of Jordan, Dajani won the prize, which was established in 1989, for his book in Arabic entitled "Comprehensive Essentials of Urology." He received the prize in Algiers on April 8 for his book which he says is aimed at promoting and developing medical sciences.

Dajani was awarded the prize, hailed by Algerian press reports as a "remarkable achievement for Jordanian medicine," by outgoing Algerian President Liamine Zeroul in a ceremony attended by government officials and Arab ambassadors at the People's Palace in Algiers.

Dajani was awarded the prize upon the recommendation of a referring committee of Arab doctors tasked with evaluating works by doctors from all over the Arab World. The committee is composed of six professors selected by the executive committee of the Pan-Arab Medical Union as well as three Algerian professors appointed by the Algerian

Medical Union. In an interview with the Jordan Times this week, Dajani said that his book, which is the outcome of several years of work, is aimed at aiding Jordanian and Arab universities in teaching medicine in Arabic.

"The book was written in Arabic because I believe that we should teach in our mother tongue. Perhaps we are the only race which does not honour its own language," said Dajani, adding that leading medical references in the golden era were Arab "giants of medicine," like Al Razi, Ibn Sina, Al Zahawi and many others whose works "remained the basics of medical knowledge and teaching at many European universities."

"Comprehensive Essentials of Urology" is composed of 21 chapters, covering the whole subject of anatomy, embryology, physiology, diseases and surgery of the genito-urinary tracts. The 671-page book has illustrations, diagrams and X-rays collected during Dajani's academic work.

Dajani says that he hopes to publish his book, which would cater as a reference for medical students all over the Arab World on the M.B.B.Ch. level and first and second year residents in urology by the end of this year.

Science, public hygiene bring 'revolution in longevity'

By Bernard Besserglik
Agence France Presse

LIFE, DESCRIBED by Thomas Hobbes as nasty, brutish and short, has improved over the 20th century in at least one respect: it goes on rather longer than before.

The facts speak for themselves. In 1900, life expectancy for males in the industrialised world was around 45, and that for women was 50. A hundred years later, the figures were 75 and 80 respectively.

In 1900, just one per cent of the world's population was aged 65 or over. In 1999 the figure was eight per cent, and in 2020 the proportion is expected to rise to almost one-fifth, with an even higher percentage in Europe. Improvements in public health policies, housing and eating habits, allied to advances in medical care involving anti-biotics, vaccines and transplants, have wrought a revolution in longevity whose consequences are still far from fully worked out. Not only the structures of society but our perceptions of life and death are being radically altered by the virtual doubling, over the past 100 years, of the span of adult life.

Until recently, men worked until they retired and usually died a year or

two later. Now, living longer and often retiring earlier, they and their wives form a social category whose explosive growth will have far-reaching consequences for the generations that follow them.

"People are now living much closer to their full biological potential," notes Thomas Kirkwood, professor of biological gerontology at the University of Manchester. "Lives used to be cut short by disease or accidents. Now they are ended by the ageing process, an accumulation of degenerative conditions which we can combat."

This surge in life expectancy has come about in a century whose distinguishing feature has been its unprecedented violence, in which men have devised ever more ingenious ways of inflicting death on their supposed enemies, including poison gas, hydrogen bombs and, uniquely, extermination by gas chamber.

An estimated 90 deaths per 1,000 over the century were caused by war or its side-effects, compared with 15 per 1,000 over the period 1800-99.

Peace-time too holds new perils. A further cull of around 25,000,000 lives, almost three times the toll of World War I, have been lost on the roads since the advent of popular motoring in the early 1900's.

'[The] surge in life expectancy has come about in a century whose distinguishing feature has been its unprecedented violence'

Inequality prevails in death as elsewhere: between social classes (the poor die younger), between nations (life expectancy remains much lower in the developing world) and even between the sexes (women's life-span is significantly longer than men's).

Western society, with its increasingly sedentary ways of working, has

devised new ways of dying. Cardiovascular diseases and cancers, often related to smoking, now account for around three-quarters of all deaths.

As family ties have loosened, so too has death been displaced from the home, where the dying were traditionally comforted by their loved ones, to the hospital and hospice.

The ethics of death have become hugely more complex. With science able to keep the body functioning even in cases where the prospect of the patient leading a meaningful life has vanished, as with coma patients or sufferers from incurable pain, the right to death, or euthanasia, has been increasingly sought, and in some cases granted.

The finality of death has haunted mankind since the earliest times. The Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh, written two millennia before Christ, testifies to the power of the dream of immortality. Scores of Americans have paid out large sums of money to have their bodies frozen, after death, at temperatures of minus 196 centigrade, in the hope that the technology of the future may find a way of restoring them to life. Far from such fantasies, Kirkwood believes that science's first task must be to improve the conditions in which people live out old age, extend-

ing health span rather than life span. Life expectancy will continue to rise in the next century, he predicts, but much more slowly than of late.

On the inevitability of ageing, he offers a ray of hope: "Biological systems do not intrinsically have to run down with time. For example there are some species, kinds of freshwater hydra, that simply don't age."

For Kirkwood, "there is no such thing as a death gene, programming us to die for evolutionary purposes." Science provides no evidence of a gene for ageing, he says: "The body is not programmed for death but for survival."

Research into gene therapy, tissue engineering, replacement body parts and the cure or prevention of fatal diseases is constantly probing at the limits of mortality. Thus scientists in the United States, operating on monkeys, succeeded in keeping an ape alive for two weeks after transplanting a head onto a new body.

Such developments lend a sudden whiff of plausibility to the fantastic claim by "The Immortalist," in Heathcote Williams' play of that title, written 20 years ago, that "there are people being born today who may never die."

Rubin unveils U.S. global finance proposals, calls for more discipline

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin called on Wednesday for tighter financial discipline by both creditors and borrowers as he unveiled fresh U.S. proposals to head off future economic crises.

In a speech here ahead of World Bank-IMF gatherings, Rubin put flesh on the bones of measures outlined in broad terms Tuesday by President Bill Clinton.

Clinton and Rubin both argued that steps taken last year, notably to stimulate growth in industrialised nations and to speed assistance to countries in trouble, had borne fruit.

The IMF also this week said recoveries — albeit fragile — were beginning to take shape in South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia and predicted that Brazil's problems would not unduly upset markets elsewhere in Latin America.

But to consolidate such gains and avert future instability, according to Rubin, "a critical challenge is to devel-

op inducements for developing economies to adopt sound policies and for industrial country creditors and investors to weigh risks more appropriately in decision-making."

He argued that foreign private creditors had to take responsibility when their investments in emerging markets go sour.

But he also warned borrowing nations to avoid a rigid adherence to fixed exchange rate regimes and cautioned them against relying on volatile short-term debt.

He advocated a stronger focus on risk management in industrial countries and called on multinational institutions to undertake "fast-disbursing emergency lending" to shield the most vulnerable segments of a society from the effects of financial turbulence.

"Market-based economic systems, and global capital flows, offer great promise for the global economy," Rubin told an academic audience. "But we can and must greatly reduce the disruptions that

can occur, with all the hardship they produce."

At the top of his list of five measures to reform the global financial system was private sector responsibility.

While borrowing countries that get into trouble should not be allowed to escape repaying their debts, "market discipline will work only if creditors bear the consequences of the risks that they take," Rubin maintained.

In some cases, private creditors from rich countries may have to accept "a restructuring or refinancing" of private debt obligations.

In other more drastic situations, he said, "it may not be possible to avoid a temporary interruption in some debt repayments."

In confronting the global turbulence that originated in Thailand in July 1997, Washington has pressed foreign lenders to show flexibility toward borrowers in crisis-hit countries.

Such an approach should accompany official assistance from governments and inter-

national lending bodies, according to U.S. officials.

The Clinton administration has had to deal with accusations from critics here that coming to the aid of countries in trouble merely compensates imprudent bankers and creditors who loaned them money they should not have.

Secondly, Rubin said, emerging market economies should try to steer clear of spending their resources to prop up their currencies under fixed exchange rates.

While such regimes are appropriate in certain cases, "they will only work when backed by a real political commitment to reform and sound policy."

Rubin showed himself to be clearly uncomfortable with proposals in certain Latin American countries such as Argentina to adopt the U.S. dollar as their national currency, a move he said could deprive such governments of the capacity to alter domestic interest rates.

Thirdly, to avoid excessive volatility and disruption, according to Rubin, emerging countries should be encouraged to rely more heavily on long-term borrowing.

Analysts attributed much of

the upheaval in South East Asia to "hot money," short-term loans that moved so quickly into and out of emerging markets that stability was harmed.

Fourthly, industrial countries need to practice better risk management of their lending, particularly when such investments are doing well — "because reducing excesses of the booms will reduce the likelihood and severity of the busts."

Rubin finally urged the IMF to pay more attention to the needs of the poor as it works with troubled economies to shrink budget deficits.

Clinton on Tuesday warned that the global economy still faced major risks and outlined a six-point programme he said could help prevent future financial turmoil.

The plan calls for steps to shield the international financial system and vulnerable, debt-burdened developing countries from disruptive capital flows.

Clinton also urged the World Bank and the IMF to pay greater attention to the needs of the poor in crisis-hit countries and said private creditors should share some of the burden when markets

collapse.

The president said that as a result of intervention by industrialised nations, some of the economies shaken by

losses of capital and confidence since 1997 are beginning to recover.

"But substantial risks and challenges remain," he insist-

ed. "This is not a moment for complacency. It's a moment to act to prevent financial crisis from reaching catastrophic stages in the future."

Exchange Rates Wednesday, 21-04-99									
CURRENCY	UNIT	JO	US	UK	FR	DE	IT	ES	JP
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1885	0.1927	1.8777	1.8387	0.1945	2.3218	0.2077	0.7080
SAUDI RYAL	5.2573	1.0000	1.0208	9.8470	9.7403	1.0301	12.2895	1.1005	3.7505
U.A.E. DIRHAM	5.1893	0.9795	1.0000	9.7441	9.5418	1.0301	12.0467	1.0781	3.6740
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.3328	0.1005	0.1026	1.0000	0.9792	0.1026	1.2381	0.1105	0.3771
QATAR RYAL	0.3439	0.1027	0.1048	1.0000	0.9792	0.1026	1.2381	0.1105	0.3651
OMAN RYAL	5.1427	0.9708	0.9910	9.8285	9.4552	1.0303	11.8404	1.0884	3.6410
KUWAIT DINAR	0.4307	0.0813	0.0830	0.8087	0.7919	0.0837	1.0000	0.0885	0.3048
EGYPT POUND	4.8138	0.0807	0.0827	8.0386	8.0508	0.0830	11.1783	1.0000	3.4060
LIBYAN LIRA	21.2147	4.0048	4.0882	39.8356	39.0079	4.1282	49.2572	4.0000	13.0000
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2698	0.2722	2.6322	2.5911	0.2746	3.2794	0.2634	1.0000
BRITISH STERLING	0.6785	0.1269	0.1285	1.2692	1.2512	0.1278	1.5625	0.1206	0.4348
GERMAN MARK	2.6223	0.4912	0.5015	4.9894	4.7848	0.5000	6.0420	0.5408	1.8424
SWITZERLAND FRA	2.1312	0.4023	0.4107	4.0019	3.9187	0.4144	4.9443	0.4428	1.5089
FRANCE FRANC	3.7270	0.6474	0.6617	6.6370	6.4045	0.6370	7.8227	0.7130	2.3781
ITALY LIRA	1.6839	0.3178	0.3245	3.1619	3.0962	0.3274	3.9397	0.3495	1.1922
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.2519	0.4335	0.4400	4.3554	4.2510	0.4370	5.2747	0.4644	1.5366
FINLAND MARKKA	11.6434	2.2585	2.2800	22.5748	21.9117	2.3057	27.5427	2.4644	8.3966
SPAIN PESSETA	35.7813	6.6831	6.7843	66.3729	64.3679	6.6831	80.8137	7.3518	23.8000
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	53.4723	10.1320	10.3430	100.7424	98.6885	10.4307	124.8188	11.1502	38.0000
AUSTRALIA DOLLA	2.1780	0.4112	0.4187	4.0887	4.0047	0.4239	5.0570	0.4625	1.5400
NEW ZEALAND DOLLA	4.3343	0.8182	0.8352	8.1387	7.9886	0.8426	10.0536	0.9254	3.0600
INDONESIA RUPIAH	1.7585	0.1452	0.1462	1.4242	1.3945	0.1478	1.7611	0.1576	0.5370
THAILAND BATH	18.2085	3.4558	3.5278	34.3750	33.8908	3.5568	42.8052	3.8031	12.9611
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1047	0.3973	0.4058	3.9520	3.8609	0.4063	4.8867	0.4372	1.4601
EURO	1.2502	0.2511	0.2567	2.4973	2.4454	0.2506	3.0830	0.2783	0.9418

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

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DEPOSIT INTEREST PRICES

CURRENCY	1 YEAR	3 MONTH	6 MONTH	9 MONTH
US DOLLAR	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
BRITISH STERLING	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
EURO	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
GERMAN MARK	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
FRANCE FRANC	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
ITALY LIRA	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
SPAIN PESSETA	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
INDONESIA RUPIAH	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
THAILAND BATH	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
CANADA DOLLAR	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

CURRENCY	ASK	BID
US DOLLAR	0.1885	0.1880
BRITISH STERLING	0.1269	0.1264
GERMAN MARK	0.4912	0.4887
FRANCE FRANC	0.6474	0.6449
ITALY LIRA	0.3178	0.3153
SPAIN PESSETA	6.6831	6.6581
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	10.1320	10.0870
INDONESIA RUPIAH	0.1452	0.1447
THAILAND BATH	3.4558	3.4503
CANADA DOLLAR	0.3973	0.3968
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	0.4112	0.4107
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	0.8182	0.8177

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The Czech Week

STARTING 24th April 1999 until 30th April 1999 the Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan and the Czech Embassy will be organising a full festive week of Czech culture and cuisine. Visitors will be able to enjoy a variety of delicious Czech meals prepared by Czech chefs flown in specially from the Inter-Continental Prague.

The brilliant Lucka group of seven folk musicians will present the gems of the lively heritage of the Czech folklore. In addition, the Art Trio of Prague will perform through the week, playing some of the classical works by famous Czech composers like Antonin Dvorak, Bedrich Smetana and Josef Suk.

To top this cultural event an exhibition of contemporary Czech graphic and paper arts will be displayed as well as an example of traditional handicraft production.

The Czech car industry will also be present during this event. Guests and visitors can get to know more about it through video presentation. A new model of Skoda Octavia car will be on display, too.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) There's a good chance that you've got a cold. It's unusual for an Aries to get sick, so you may not recognise it. You may just be feeling lazy and beating yourself up about it. Stop that! You hereby have permission to stay in bed and watch TV.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) There's good information coming in today. Your mind is like a sponge, soaking up everything you can find. Don't waste your memory banks on trivia. Remember the old computer jargon about garbage in, garbage out? Well, stay away from the garbage dump today.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There's money coming into your account today. You want to spend it on travel. If you're not careful, you might spend it on travel before you actually get the money. That is not usually a good idea, but today it could work. Have a great time while you're at it.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) People are noticing what you've been doing, and they're favourably impressed. Don't get a swelled head, though. What's more important is the money you're able to put in the bank. Do that first.

before you go to the mall. Don't forget to stash some into a savings account you can't get at.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There might be some serious shopping to do. Get a Cancer or Taurus friend to help with a big purchasing decision. You might wind up buying something that's damaged or used, but that's OK. Once you polish it up, nobody will know you paid half price for it.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) You could find yourself on a tour or a cruise or a volunteer committee. Think of whatever you like to do, then do it. It looks like there's service involved, which is not at all unusual for you. So get out and take care of others and you'll make a lot of great friends in the process.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) Your assignment today is to provide what's required. Pay attention to what

an older person needs and see if there's some way you can help. Good deeds you do now will be repaid to you later.

That's not always the case, but this time it looks like a pretty even trade.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) Travel and romance are the theme. In fact, you could be halfway across the country by now. Or you could travel via video, which would work just as well. And less chance of losing your luggage! Either way, you must have a romantic, exciting interlude. That's top priority no matter where you are.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Figure out how much money you've got and make up a list of all the stuff you need to buy, including educational expenses. Money from savings might even be used to buy new tools or equipment. That's OK. That's what you've been saving

it for.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Sometimes you get so busy there's no time for affection. Well, there will be time today, if you make it happen. This doesn't have to be romantic love. It could be the love of a parent for a child, or the love of a kid for his dog. Whatever your object of affection, you need to let him or her know.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Investigate ways to save money. For example, if you have fruit trees, there's no reason you should ever have to buy fruit. There's work involved, but you can put up what you need for later. If that's a good analogy for you, think of a better one... and get busy!

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You're likely to get bold and outspoken this evening, probably in a romantic setting. So make a date with someone with whom you'd like to make a lifelong commitment. If you're already in a lifelong commitment with that person, so much the better.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Endure
- Ment
- Goats
- Toward shelter
- Elbe tributary
- Eagle's residence
- Slanted type: abbr.
- India's dress
- Pope's triple crown
- Babe
- Owl
- Cambodia's — Not
- Lisa Bonet on "The Cosby Show"
- European capital
- Dispatch boat
- Appear to be
- Beaver construction
- Babe
- Wind dir.
- Oscillates a tail
- Part of South Africa
- Wanderers
- Lymphoid mass in the mouth
- Our sun
- Unhurt
- Babe
- Fill an empty flat
- King's mountains
- Storage building
- Lucky people?
- Fits out
- Play of "God's Little Acre"
- Mirror
- Australian state: abbr.
- Blind element

DOWN

- Noncleric
- High: pref.
- Writer O'Casey
- Broadcast on the boob tube
- Secondhand deal
- Colorful chalcid
- Garr or Hatcher
- Severed or Clapton
- Rootless courtyards
- Holds the title of monarch
- Preacher Roberts
- Desperate
- Feasting spot
- Stoneworker
- In a vertical line
- Evans and Bumpers
- Occurrence
- African nation
- Masses of ice
- Alejandro and Fernando
- Prepares copy
- Neighbor of Maui
- Get a noseful
- Moselle tributary
- Reckless
- Kind of switch
- Redgrave and Williams
- Take stock
- Teenagers
- Chinese (among other things)
- Obstacles
- Reckless
- Hand-fed fly
- Lamb's pen name
- Tangy
- Inter —
- (among other things)
- Fortitude
- "M*A*S*H" star
- Horn hawk

Peanuts

HEY, CHUCK... HOW'D YOUR GAME GO THE OTHER DAY?

WELL, WE WERE BEHIND FORTY TO NOTHING, BUT THEN IT STARTED TO RAIN SO THE GAME GOT CALLED OFF.

WOW! GREAT COMEBACK, CHUCK!

IT WASN'T A COMEBACK. THE GAME WAS CALLED OFF.

FOR YOU THAT'S A COMEBACK, CHUCK! HA! HA! HA!

I'LL BET HE ENJOYS YOUR CALLS, SIR.

Zits

WHEN WE PICK UP SARA, THE NEXT TO GO ANYTHING TOO RUDE OR ENHANCING ONLY.

IT'S A GOOD THING THAT YOU REMEMBERED THAT, JEREMY.

I WAS ACTUALLY CONSIDERING SAYING "HELLO SARA" OR "HI SARA" OR "HEY SARA" OR "HOW ARE YOU?" OR "WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?"

IN THAT CASE, REMEMBERED IT, DID YOU?

YOU'RE BEING REALLY NICE, JEREMY. THANKS FOR REMEMBERING.

Mutt'n' Jeff

DOC, MY BROTHER JULIUS HERE. DOESN'T FEEL ANY BETTER?

WELL, JULIUS, HAVE YOU CUT OUT ALL THE STARCHES AND SWEETS AND SUGAR JUST ONE CLEAR A DAY?

YES, SIR. I CUT OUT ALL THE STARCHES AND SWEETS.

BUT THINKING THAT ONE CIGAR A DAY HELPS KILLS ME.

I NEVER SMOKED BEFORE IN MY LIFE!

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

"I'm afraid of exercise. I did a few situps once and look how big my abs got!"

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ANUFA

ILLAC

BLUEBB

TREENI

A ROOMFUL OF FRISKY CLUBS CAN BE THIS.

Now arrange the lettered letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answers tomorrow

Answer: What the forecaster asked up with during the summer — A HOT TOPIC

Enqvist ousted in rain hit Monte Carlo Open

MONTE CARLO (AFP) — Swede Thomas Enqvist fell victim to heavy conditions, taking a second-round loss on a rainy day at the \$2.45 million Monte Carlo Open on Wednesday.

The 12th-seeded Australian Open finalist looked far from his top form on clay, admittedly not his favourite surface. Enqvist was ousted without ceremony 6-2, 6-0 by Spain's veteran battler Francisco Clavet in 69 minutes.

Late in the contest, Enqvist made an attempt to save face and prevent a total rout as he seized three break points chances on two separate occasions in the penultimate game.

Clavet, 21st in the world, saved the first two and the Swede failed on the third with a two-fisted backhand just wide. Another error from the sagging Swede gave the Spaniard a match-winning opportunity, which Clavet missed. But the 47th unforced errors from the seed yielded another match

point, and Enqvist went out with a return long.

Enqvist converted only one of seven break point chances while the 30-year-old Clavet came good on six of ten.

Enqvist never had the patience to stay for the duration as he and the Spaniard battled on a covered court at the Monte Carlo Country Club as rain wrecked a full second-round programme. In the only other match completed by early afternoon, Morocco's Hicham Arazi outclassed Argentine Mariano Puerta 6-1, 6-4. During a break in the weather, fifth seed Mark Philippoussis got on Centre Court court against Ramon Delgado of Paraguay. But that encounter was halted with the score level at 2-all when more rain began to fall.

Scheduled to open with second-round matches Wednesday were the top two seeds, Carlos Moya and Yevgeny Kafelnikov.

Duncan, Spurs cool off Jazz

SALT LAKE CITY (R)

— A red-hot Tim Duncan cooled off the Utah Jazz on Tuesday as the San Antonio Spurs sent a message that they would be no pushovers in the playoffs this year.

Duncan scored 23 off his 36 points in the second half, grabbed 10 rebounds and blocked seven shots as the Spurs ended the 11-game winning streak of the league-leading Jazz with a decisive 83-69 victory.

Duncan was the dominant force on the court as he recorded his 30th double-double of the season. "What he was very aggressive," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said of Duncan. "When he's aggressive right off the bat and thinking about taking over games is when he's at his best."

One night after clinching a playoff berth, the Spurs climbed within three games of the Jazz, who had knocked San Antonio out of the playoffs in three of the last five years.

Karl Malone had 23 points and 13 rebounds to lead the Jazz, who went scoreless for nearly 4 1/2 minutes down the stretch to see the longest winning streak in the NBA this season halted.

"They played their butts off and they did everything they wanted to do down the stretch," Malone said.

At Golden State, Kobe Bryant scored 27 points as the Los Angeles Lakers rallied from a 28-point second-quarter deficit without Shaquille O'Neal to beat the Warriors 106-102 in overtime.

O'Neal was ejected in the second quarter and the Lakers trailed by 16 at the half. But Bryant led a furious comeback, scoring 25 of his points after intermission, including a tying tip-in at the regulation buzzer and a key dunk in overtime.

Robert Horry added 17 points with two free throws in overtime to seal the win.

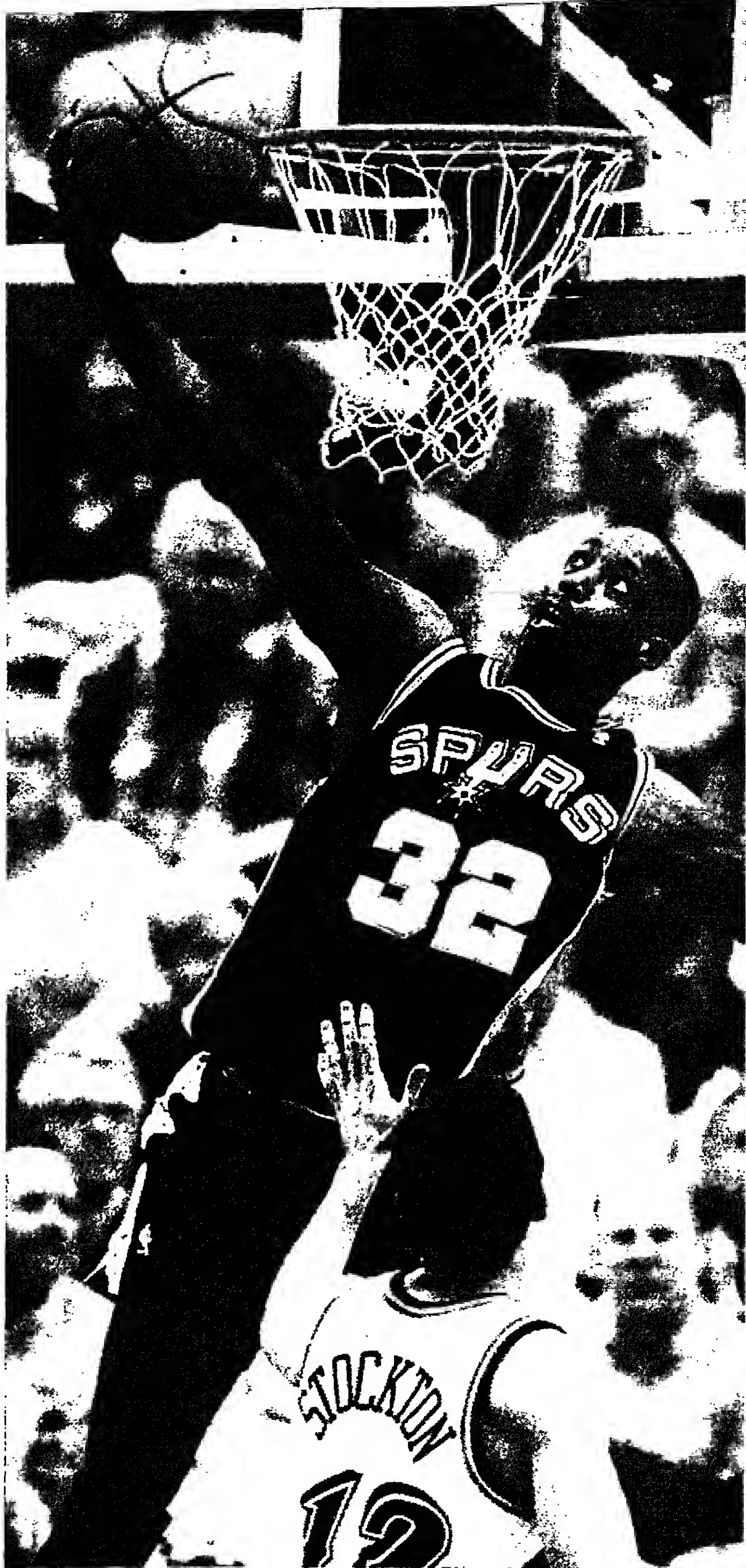
In Toronto, Chris Crawford scored a career-high 18 points and Mookie Blaylock added 16 to lead six Hawks in double figures as Atlanta posted a 103-81 victory over the Raptors.

The Hawks, who reached triple figures for the first time in a dozen games, had failed to break 85 points in the eight games Steve Smith sat out with a sprained knee.

Smith scored 10 of his 14 points in the third quarter when the Hawks pulled away, outscoring Toronto 32-18.

Toronto (20-21) fell one game behind Cleveland in the race for the final playoff berth in the Eastern Conference.

In Chicago, Toni Kukoc had 25 points, seven rebounds and nine assists before leaving in the fourth quarter with a shoulder injury as the Bulls posted an 83-77 victory over the



Sean Elliott of the San Antonio Spurs shoots over John Stockton of the Utah Jazz during first half action in Salt Lake City, Utah (AFP photo)

Washington Wizards. Kukoc was attempting a driving layup with 3:51 to play when he was fouled hard by Washington forward Otis Thorpe and knocked to the floor.

Dickey Simpkins had 15 points and 13 rebounds for the Bulls and rookie Cory Carr, making his first start, helped hold Mitch Richmond to just 12 points while scoring 10 himself.

In Dallas, Michael Finley turned his former team with a season-high 36 points, including a jumper and two free throws in the final 6.5 seconds, as the Mavericks downed the Phoenix Suns 104-100.

Finley, who also had 10 rebounds, scored 13 points in the fourth quarter, when Dallas overcame a 16-point deficit by outscoring the Suns 32-16.

Jason Kidd and Cliff Robinson scored 17 points apiece for Phoenix.

In Milwaukee, Glenn Robinson scored 10 of his 18 points in the final 7 1/2 minutes as the bucks rallied for a 95-83 victory over the Orlando Magic.

Milwaukee outscored Orlando 25-7 in the final 7:29 — 12-0 over the last 2:32 — to hold onto sixth place in the East, one game ahead of Philadelphia.

Ray Allen also scored 18 points for the bucks. Penny Hardaway led Orlando with 17 points and nine assists.

Brazil, France top FIFA rankings

PARIS (AFP) — Latest FIFA rankings published Wednesday:

- | | |
|----------------|---------|
| 1. Brazil | 817 pts |
| 2. France | 786 |
| 3. Germany | 746 |
| 4. Italy | 743 |
| 5. Czech Rep. | 741 |
| 6. Croatia | 734 |
| 7. Argentina | 732 |
| 8. Spain | 720 |
| 9. Holland | 709 |
| 10. England | 700 |
| 11. Romania | 700 |
| 12. Norway | 685 |
| 13. Mexico | 684 |
| 14. Sweden | 677 |
| 15. Portugal | 667 |
| 16. Yugoslavia | 650 |
| 17. Denmark | 636 |
| 18. Austria | 633 |
| 19. Morocco | 624 |
| 20. Paraguay | 609 |
| 21. Chile | 605 |
| 22. Ukraine | 604 |
| 23. Bulgaria | 601 |
| 24. U.S. | 600 |
| 25. Belgium | 599 |
| 26. Slovakia | 598 |
| 27. S. Africa | 596 |
| 28. Scotland | 592 |
| 29. Tunisia | 591 |
| 30. Colombia | 583 |

Injury forces Graf out for 2 weeks

HAMBURG (AFP) —

Former World No. 1 Steffi Graf has pulled out of this weekend's Federation Cup match against Japan and next week's Hamburg WTA tournament because of injury.

Graf complained of pains in her right foot during practice here on Wednesday with the German team and later announced she was taking a two week break.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Bugalski's win defies odds

LLORET DE MAR Spain (AFP) — France's Philippe Bugalski driving a Citroen defied the odds when he won the Rally of Catalunya here on Wednesday. Bugalski is driving a Citroen Kit Car — a special lightweight two wheel drive version of the rally cars used by the other teams, held off 1998 winner Didier Auriol in a Toyota Corolla and defending world champion Tommi Makinen in a Mitsubishi Lancer. Auriol was 31 seconds in arrears and Makinen 2mins 21seconds.

Australian premier to open Games

SYDNEY (AFP) — Prime Minister John Howard looked even more likely to open next year's Sydney Olympics after being endorsed by a senior International Olympic Committee member here Wednesday. "It's yet to be resolved but it's perfectly appropriate for a prime minister to open it," said Kevan Gosper, a Sydney organising committee (SOCOG) vice-president and an IOC Executive Board member. The Olympic charter states that an Olympic Games is normally opened by the host nation's head of state — in this case Queen Elizabeth II — or the Governor-General as her representative in Australia. New South Wales Olympics minister and SOCOG president Michael Knight said he would ask the SOCOG board later this year to decide who should open the Games. "It should be resolved this year, it shouldn't be waiting around until next year," he said. Howard has said repeatedly he thinks the honour should go to the prime minister and with Queen Elizabeth expected for a state visit early in 2000 it is unlikely she would come back to open the Games in September.

IOC see Balkan threat to Athens

SYDNEY (AFP) — International Olympic Committee Executive Board member Kevan Gosper said here Wednesday the 2004 Athens Summer Games could be threatened if the Balkan crisis spread. "If the events in Central Europe are contained, as we all hope and pray they are, then I'd say that it would have negligible, negligible effect on Sydney," he said of the 2000 Games here. "If the events run on and spread, then there is some risk, and if that happens then there could be risk for Athens," he added.

O'Neill has full programme

BRISBANE (AFP) — Australia's Olympic 200m butterfly champion Susie O'Neill will use the Pan Pacific Championships in Sydney in August as a dress rehearsal for next year's Sydney Olympics. O'Neill said Wednesday she would contest the 100m and 200m butterfly, the 200m freestyle and relay events at the Pan Pacific Championships on August 22-29. She surprised herself at the Pan Pac trials in Brisbane a few weeks ago when she broke the Commonwealth record in one of her weaker events, the 200m freestyle. O'Neill said she could not choose between the 200m freestyle or 100m butterfly because she was currently world ranked in about the same position in both events. However, the Pan Pacs would help her make a decision on the makeup of her programme for the 2000 Olympics. "It will be fairly busy and it'll be a dress rehearsal for the Olympics. I'll make my final decision ... after this meet," O'Neill said at an Australian team orientation camp on the Gold Coast, south of here. With the semi-final format she would have a "challenging" programme at the Pan Pacs, which also involves swimmers from the United States, South Africa, Canada and Japan. "We only tried it once, that was at trials, and it's a bit more tiring," O'Neill said of the introduction of semi-finals. "There's one extra race for each event but everyone's got to do it though, so it's a challenge."



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SAVING

PRIVATE RYAN

Show: 9:30

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PHILADELPHIA '2'

Sophie Marceau ...
in Leo Tolstoy's

ANNA

KARENINA

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15,
8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:5699238
PLAZA

Antonio Banderas... in
THE MASK
OF ZORRO

Shows: 12:30, 3:30

Bruce Willis ... in

ARMAGEDDON

Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:5677420
CONCORDE

ALWAD MAHROUS
BTA' AL WAZIR

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CONCORDE 2

DISCLOSURE

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GALLERIA 1

ABDOUN

www.cns.com-jo/Galleria

Will Smith & Gene Hackman... in

ENEMY OF

THE STATE

Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45

CINEMA TEL:5934793
GALLERIA 2

ABDOUN

www.cns.com-jo/Galleria

Dennis Quaid
& Natasha Richardson... in

THE PARENT TRAP

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LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



National soccer team leaves for Iraq

AMMAN — The national soccer team will leave for Iraq on Thursday to hold a one-week training camp as part of preparations for the 9th Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament. During the camp, the team will train twice a day and hold friendlies with its Iraqi counterpart. Head of the delegation Mansour Qardan said the trip comes within the framework of the new agenda set by HRH Prince Ali, president of the Jordan Football Association (JFA), to release players from work duties in order to enable them to properly prepare for the Games. He added that the Olympic team will also hold two training camps in Oman and the UAE, and that the JFA will evaluate their activities in a meeting after both teams return home. The national team's visit will be the first after its participation in the Arab Cup where Jordan was eliminated in the first round of the event which was held in Qatar last September.

SCOREBOARD

NBA			
Atlanta	103	Toronto	81
San Antonio	83	Utah	69
Chicago	83	Washington	77
Dallas	104	Phoenix	100
Milwaukee	95	Orlando	83
LA Lakers	106	Golden State	102 (OT)
Portland at Denver (postponed)			
UEFA Cup semifinal, second leg results			
• At Bologna, Italy			
Bologna (Ita)	1	Marseille (Fra)	1
(Marseille qualify on away goals, aggregate score 1-1)			
• At Parma, Italy			
Parma (Ita)	2	Atletico Madrid (Spa)	1
(Parma qualify 5-2 for the final)			
European Cup Winners Cup			
Semifinal, second leg			
Lazio (Ita) v Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus)			
Real Mallorca (Spa) v Chelsea (Eng)			



Pete Sampras

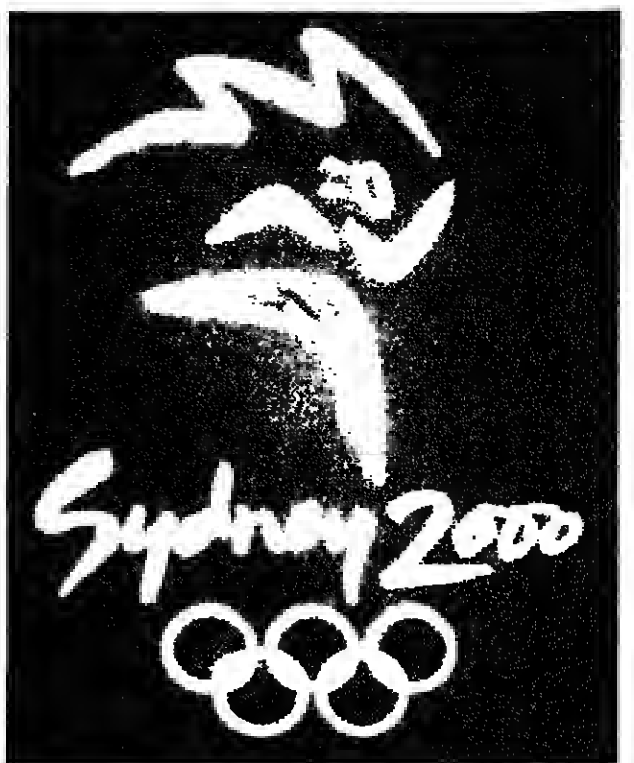
ATP names Sampras player of the year

MONTE CARLO (AFP) — American Pete Sampras, who finished as the year-end No. 1 for a record sixth consecutive year, has been named the ATP Tour Player of the Year for 1998. It is the sixth straight time Sampras has been named player of the year. The previous best was five straight times by Bjorn Borg. "I look at it as an ultimate achievement. This is a record that I feel will never probably be broken," said Sampras, who had to miss this week's Monte Carlo Open with a lower back injury. Dutchmen Jacco Eltingh and Paul Haarhuis were named Doubles Team of the Year for the second time after winning the award in 1994, while popular Spaniard Alex Corretja won the Stefan Edberg Sportsmanship Award, also for the second time. Two-time U.S. Open winner Patrick Rafter received the Arthur Ashe Humanitarian of the Year Award. The Australian has been involved in several charity activities and launched the Patrick Rafter Cherish the Children Foundation last February. "This is a pretty big step in my life. We're very opti-

IOC refuses to bow to U.S. pressure over reform

SYDNEY (AFP) — The Olympic movement will refuse to bow to American pressure to report on a monthly basis on efforts being made to clean up its act, International Olympic Committee (IOC) Vice-President Kevan Gosper said here Wednesday. Arizona Republican John McCain told IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch last week his Senate Commerce Committee was unconvinced by proposed reforms following the Salt Lake City bribery scandal, and asked for a monthly update on the progress of IOC action. Ten IOC members have resigned or been expelled in the scandal, which involved a million-dollar scheme to buy votes in Salt Lake's successful quest for the 2002 Winter Games. Last month, the IOC established an ethics commission with a majority of outside members and a task force, IOC 2000, to revamp its membership, voting practices and public accountability. IOC 2000 is scheduled to make a preliminary report in June and have its final recommendations ready by December. "I don't think we have any responsibility to report to a Senate commission on a monthly basis," Gosper said here Wednesday. "I don't know any international corporations doing the same and I don't know any U.S. corporations doing the same, and I wonder why we should be asked to do the same," the Australian IOC Executive Board member added.

U.S. firms supply \$1.5 billion of the \$4 billion the IOC will make from sponsorship and television rights up to the 2000 Sydney Games. The NBC television network is paying a further \$3.5 billion for the rights to Olympics through to 2008. Gosper admitted bidding committees would always do their best to sway votes. "Clearly there are inducement processes involved in bidding for the Games," he said. But he believed it would be wrong for the U.S. Senate to try to tie the IOC down to American Anti-Corruption Practices or the OECD-initiated bribery legislation put in place in 1987. "The best regulation is self-regulation," he said. But he said many of the proposals made by former U.S. Senate majority leader George Mitchell following the Salt Lake City scandal would be taken on board. The ethics commission faces the first test of its credibility when it meets for the first time on May 3 and will have to handle accusations made against Phil Coles, Gosper's fellow-Australian. One short step away from being expelled from the IOC after being given a very serious warning for accepting \$38,000 worth of lavish holidays from Salt Lake City. He is now under investigation over allegations his ex-wife received jewellery worth \$6,000 from the team involved with Athens' failed bid for the 1996 Games. "If we complete the investigation with the information we have at our disposal in sufficient time the Executive Board can make a decision on the matter," Gosper said. He denied the newly-



formed ethics commission would merely report to the Executive Board. "At the end of the day the Executive Board has to accept the recommendation of the ethics committee," he said.

Secret Australian drug trials produce 'incredible' performances

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian athletes taking part in tests with banned drugs have shown "incredible increases" in performance, a report said Wednesday. Twenty-two athletes are being injected with the performance-enhancing drug Erythropoietin (EPO) and 11 are being given a placebo in trials to develop a reliable doping test before the Sydney 2000 Olympics. "We are seeing huge increases in performance in a very short amount of time," Australian Institute of Sports (AIS) scientist Hamilton Lee told the Sydney Daily Telegraph. "We don't know who is on EPO and who is taking a placebo but there are incredible increases."

EPO occurs naturally in humans but some endurance athletes inject it to enhance their performance as it increases the ability of the bloodstream to carry oxygen. It is not detectable through urine analysis and there is currently no reliable test. Details of the results are being kept under strict wraps until the tests are concluded in late April, but Australian Sports Commission director Geoff Strang said the results were "very exciting." "The present task is to see whether we can detect artificial EPO," he said. The AIS has been injecting the athletes under the management of physiologists and doctors three

times a week. The tests are being conducted in consultation with the Australian Sports Drug Agency. None of the athletes have been told whether they are on EPO or a placebo. The athletes, who have not been named but are believed to be just below elite Olympic level, will have to stand down from competition for 1-4 weeks to allow the drug to leave the body after the five-week programme. There are potential health concerns, but the athletes, aged 18 to 35, have been carefully monitored and the programme had been passed by the AIS ethics committee.

On-and-off pitch controversy dog Marseille's UEFA Cup win

PARIS (AFP) — Marseille's UEFA Cup celebrations in reaching the UEFA Cup final at the expense of hosts Bologna on Thursday came after on-and-off pitch controversy which has traditionally surrounded the Riviera club's success in Europe. Several thousand celebrated in the streets of Marseille following Laurent Blanc's late, retaken penalty which equalised the 18th minute goal of Bologna skipper Michele Paramatti for a 1-1 draw which meant qualification on away goals. In a further twist, German referee Markus Merk seemed to have made a mistake awarding the penalty, supposedly for a foul by Bologna keeper Francesco Antonioli on substitute Florian Maurice. As expected, Parma cruised into the final after beating Atletico Madrid 2-1 also in Italy to secure a comfortable 5-2 victory on aggregate. Parma won this tournament four years ago and Argentinean Abel Balbo made sure they returned to the final with a 35th minute goal which put the result beyond doubt. Roberto headed Atletico's equaliser in the 64th minute, but Enrico Chiesa cracked home Parma's second goal with six minutes left. Bologna's Giancarlo Marocchi was sent off in the 89th minute for a foul on Marseille substitute Titi Camara but Marseille held on. Then riot police had to intervene in a brawl between both teams as they left the pitch. A delegate of European football's governing body UEFA said a report would be submitted. "We will have to wait and see whether disciplinary measures will be taken," the delegate added. "It's too early to talk about possible sanctions." Bologna refused to comment much on the incident, only saying words were exchanged between the two sides moments before the brawl started. Stephane Courbis, the son of Marseille coach Roland, who had been on the Marseille bench, was reportedly interviewed by Italian police. Rolland Courbis said afterwards: "As we made it to the final, it is logical to think that someone from Bologna started the trouble. It's normal that players are upset after losing a place to a final five minutes from the end." Marseille midfielder Frederic Brando said he knew a single goal would be enough to put them in the final, but warned: "We may lead the French championship and be in the UEFA Cup final but we haven't won anything yet. We must keep focused and take each match as it comes." Blanc scored, shooting firmly to the right, but it was the second time he had scored as referee Merk insisted the spot kick be retaken for an encroachment offence by Bologna's



Bologna skipper Michele Paramatti (L) talks to the German referee after a penalty granted to Olympique Marseille during the second leg match of the semi-final of the UEFA Cup. The two teams drew 1-1 and Marseille qualified for the final (AFP photo)

Swedish International Klas Ingesson. Skipper Blanc made no

mistake the second time to put Marseille into their third European final. They have reached the European Cup final twice, winning against AC Milan in 1993 and losing to Red Star Belgrade in 1991.

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Police clear bombs at U.S. school after rampage leaves 15 dead

LITTLETON (AFP) — Bomb squads worked Wednesday to clear explosives from Columbine High School a day after a terrifying rampage by two masked students that left 15 people dead.

Teams of experts worked to secure the school building in a Denver suburb so that the bodies of students and a teacher killed in Tuesday's rampage could be removed.

According to a final death toll, the dead included 11 males and four females, including the two suspects, who were previously identified as Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17.

But investigators were forced to delay the difficult task of removing and identifying the bodies of victims until lunch time on Wednesday because of the bomb risk.

"It appears that some of the bodies were underneath desks, boxes, cubicles. Possibly they were trying to hide from the ongoing assault," spokesman Steve Davis for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department said, describing the scene inside the school.

Davis said police found 30 explosive devices in the school and on the grounds as well as in the homes of the two suspects.

In view of the large number of devices, police were not ruling out the possibility that other people, aside from the suspects, helped plan the attack.

The quantity of "firepower, explosive devices, and ammunition" indicated that the attack had involved "quite a bit of planning," Davis said.

Some of the devices were quite sophisticated, comprising "timers and mercury switches," he pointed out.

The two students also reportedly were armed with handguns and semi-automatic weapons, although it was unclear at this point where they got them.

The motive for the attack was likewise unclear at this stage, and "we may never know now" what was behind the shooting spree, Davis admitted.

But it was clear that some of the bombs left in the school were aimed at investigators, Davis said.

This community was still reeling the day after the wrenching agony of losing children while trying to understand why the two teens embarked on their massacre.

The gunmen belonged to what students called the "Trenchcoat Mafia," a marginalised group whose trademark dress was military camouflage dress and dark trench coats and who were Internet savvy.

By nightfall Tuesday, the alleged perpetrators had become instant on-line cult figures with "The Trenchcoat" web site pulsating with online jousting. Kipland Kinkel, the teen accused in the 1998 Springfield, Oregon High School shooting also became a cult hero on the Internet.

The duo left no suicide note, but from the comments of students who witnessed the chaos, it appeared that they were targeting athletes, minorities and those who they believed had taunted them.

Aaron Cohn, 15, told the

Denver Post that he was ducking under a table when he felt a gun barrel pressed to his head. "All the jocks stand up. We are going to kill you," Cohn quoted the gunmen as saying.

Bree Pasquale said the two were laughing as they ran down the hallways shooting people. "He put a gun in my face and said, 'I'm doing this because people made fun of me last year'."

"Everyone around me got shot and I begged them for 10 minutes not to shoot me," she sobbed.

"If they don't know about them, then they weren't paying attention to the students," said Josh Nielsen, 17, who described them as anti-social and military-oriented.

"They were very into war games," Nielsen told AFP. "They always talked about guns. They weren't liked by many people and they kept to themselves. They hated everybody in the school and nobody liked them."

Several school sources described the Trenchcoat group at Columbine — thought to number around 15 — as homosexual-oriented.

The violence erupted shortly before midday Tuesday when two youths wearing black face masks and black overcoats apparently opened fire near the school cafeteria where some 200 students were gathered.

Twenty-three people were hospitalised, most with gunshot and shrapnel injuries, and at least five of those were in critical condition, police and hospital spokesmen said after the shooting.

Anxious parents waited



A woman embraces her daughter after they were reunited following the shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, on Tuesday. Fifteen were killed at the school by two young men who went on a shooting rampage (AP photo)

through the night for reports on their children who were injured and those yet unaccounted for. Officials asked them for descriptions to help

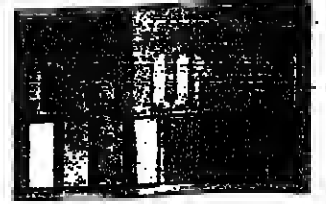
identify bodies once investigators were allowed into the school.

The rampage was the latest in a series of murderous shoot-

ings in public schools across the United States over the past two years that left 19 students and teachers dead.

The killing spree also took

place in rural areas and were perpetrated by teenagers who ranged in age from 11 to 18 and were thought by authorities to have been suicidal.



It's a nice obituary, for living musician

LONDON (R) — Friends and family of folk rock musician Dave Swarbrick liked his obituary in a top British newspaper — but they were even more happy to find out he was still alive. The Daily Telegraph apologised on Wednesday for mistakenly reporting his death at the age of 58 and carrying the obituary Tuesday. Swarbrick, a member of veteran British group Fairport Convention, is still recovering in hospital from a chest infection. "This is really going to tickle him pink," his wife Jill told the Daily Mail.

'Ed-in-soup' at Korean banquet

LONDON (AFP) — Pictures of Queen Elizabeth II's husband Prince Philip apparently dozing off during a speech she gave at a state banquet in Seoul were splashed across the British press Wednesday. A series of shots of the 77-year-old Duke of Edinburgh sitting next to South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung with his eyes shut and his head nodding dangerously close to the table featured in most British papers. Typical headlines included "My huzzband and I" in The Mirror. "One is really rather tired of one's wife making speeches like this" in The Express, and "Duke of Ed-in-soup" in The Sun.

Daredevil escapes prison time

NEW YORK (R) — A judge has clipped the wings of a daredevil Norwegian parachutist who jumped off New York City's tallest skyscrapers. Thor Axel Kappfjell, 32, of Drammen, Norway, was allowed to plead guilty to three misdemeanour counts after promising not to jump off any more buildings in the city. The 52,000 parachute he used in March to jump off one of the twin towers of the 110-storey World Trade Centre was confiscated by prosecutors as "an instrument of crime." Manhattan Supreme Court Judge Laura Viscitationi-Lewis scolded Kappfjell, who last October also parachuted off the 86th floor observation deck of the Empire State Building and the 61st floor of the Chrysler Building.

Oregon moves against call of nature on the road

PORTLAND (R) — Some things just can't wait. But Oregon highways are becoming dotted with urine-filled bottles, and state legislators have introduced a bill to put an end to these rest stops on the run. "People are peeing in bottles and throwing them out the window and our public employees have to pick them up. It is disgusting," lawmaker Bob Montgomery, a co-sponsor of the bill, told Reuters. Oregon House Bill 3530 calls for anyone caught improperly depositing human waste to pay a \$2,500 fine and temporarily lose his or her driver's licence. Most people assume the culprits are truck drivers who don't want to stop.

Church leader preaches 'joy of paying taxes'

TORONTO (R) — Thou shalt love thy taxman. That is the good word from a leading church leader as Canadians prepare to ship millions of tax forms and billions of dollars in tax payments to the federal government in Ottawa before the April 30 filing deadline. Rev. Bill Phipps, the controversial moderator of the United Church of Canada, says Canadians should embrace "the joy of paying taxes" rather than grumble about the aching heads and empty wallets that follow the annual chore. Phipps, who stirred the wrath of many Christians less than two years ago when he questioned the divinity and resurrection of Jesus, says taxes are one of the best ways for individuals to care for each other collectively.

Iran wants more than a 'diplomatic smile' from Clinton

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi welcomed Wednesday conciliatory remarks by U.S. President Bill Clinton but stressed that a "diplomatic smile" was not enough and there must be a "change in behaviour."

"Clinton's remarks indicate an admission of decades of unjust relations that the U.S. established with Iran," Kharazi said in an interview with the Jaame-Jam International Network, an Iranian television channel broadcasting abroad.

"Confession of one's misdoings, if made honestly, is something good which demands courage," the foreign minister said, according to the text of his

remarks released by the ministry.

However, "it remains to be seen whether the U.S. brings any change into its behaviour toward Iran. Certainly, there [are] many wrong policies that we expect the U.S. administration to change," Kharazi said.

Clinton's statements will be considered only a "diplomatic smile, if there is no change in behaviour," Kharazi added.

"Iran, because of its enormous geopolitical importance over time, has been the subject of quite a lot of abuse from various Western nations," Clinton said last week at a conference in the United States.

"And I think sometimes it's quite important to tell

people: look, you have a right to be angry at something my country or my culture, or others that are generally allied with us today, did to you 50 or 60 or 100 or 150 years ago," he said.

"We have to listen for possible ways we can give people the legitimacy of some of their fears, or some of their angers, or some of their common grievances, and then say they rest on other grounds."

"Now, can we build a common future?" the U.S. leader asked.

In his response, Kharazi demanded that the United States stop supporting the Mujahedeen, the main armed Iranian opposition group, which claimed responsibility for

the April 10 assassination of Iranian General Ali Sayad Shirazi.

"We see that the U.S. releases a list of terrorist groups and at the same time, the same terrorist groups and their advocates are allowed to act freely against the Islamic republic of Iran in the U.S. under different covers," Kharazi said.

Although the Mujahedeen is on the U.S. list of terrorist groups, the Mujahedeen-dominated National Council of Resistance of Iran is not. "This is an unacceptable equation," Kharazi said.

"The U.S. should prosecute such terrorist groups and avoid accusing Iran of supporting terrorism," he said.

Washington has imposed an economic embargo against Iran, which it accuses of supporting international terrorism, attempting to sabotage the Middle East peace process and seeking to obtain weapons of mass destruction.

The Islamic republic has been a frequent target of American anger since the hostage taking at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, shortly after the 1979 Islamic revolution, that led to the rupture of diplomatic ties.

Some Iranian moderates have been keen to seize on Clinton's conciliatory remarks as an opportunity to mend fences with Washington, while hardliners remain implacable in their hatred of the United States.

Liberal Iranian cleric sentenced to 18 months in prison

TEHRAN (AFP) — Mohsen Kadivar, a liberal cleric charged with spreading propaganda hostile to Iran's Islamic regime, has been sentenced to 18 months in prison, his lawyer announced Wednesday.

Hossein Musavi Tabrizi told the official IRNA news agency that Kadivar, who is close to reformist President Mohammad Khatami, had been sentenced to prison by the hardline Special Court for Clergy.

Tabrizi said he will disclose details of the sentence later and noted that it can be appealed within the next 20 days.

Kadivar, considered a leading light of the reform movement in Iran, was detained in February for writing a number of articles calling for political life in the Islamic republic to have more autonomy from religion.

A cleric and university professor opposed to the religious hardliners, he vigorously rejected last Wednesday the charges laid against him by the court during the only session of his trial.

He denied he was an "enemy of the state," charged that his trial was unconstitutional and said the court was not competent to try his case. "Investigation into political and press offences must be carried out in the presence of a jury and by a qualified court of the judiciary. The Special

Court for Clergy is not a part of the judiciary," Kadivar said. But Mohammad Salimi, head of the court, shot back that the charges against Kadivar were "not political or press offences."

The special court, which operates independently of the judiciary and almost always behind closed doors, has been heavily criticised over the arrest, which sparked demonstrations nationwide.

The special court was created in 1985 by the leader of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. In an unusual move, members of Kadivar's family and several journalists were allowed to attend last week's court session.

Some 200 journalists signed a petition saying Kadivar's arrest was unconstitutional and an "offence" against Iran's writers and intellectuals, while the streets of Tehran were plastered with pro-Kadivar posters.

His trial came amid a new and fierce offensive launched by the powerful conservative faction against supporters of President Khatami and moderate newspapers. Khatami on Thursday insisted that freedom of thought and expression was "a must" for society, even as supreme guide Ayatollah Ali Kharitenei warned against "the enemies inside" whom he said were more dangerous than those abroad.

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. planes hit Iraqi sites

ANKARA (AFP) — U.S. warplanes based in southern Turkey bombed Iraqi air defences in the northern no-fly zone in Iraq on Wednesday because they posed a threat to the aircraft, the U.S. military said in a statement from the Incirlik air base. "U.S. Air Force F-16C Falcons dropped GBU-12 laser guided bombs on anti-aircraft and surface-to-air missile sites west of Mosul," it said, adding that the incident took place between about 2:20 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. (11:20 and 1:00 GMT). The statement said all the planes taking part in the enforcement of the no-fly zone had returned to the base safely, while damage to Iraqi forces was being assessed.

'Victims of U.S. aggression' should meet

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Victims of U.S. "aggression" and economic sanctions should hold a summit to coordinate their action against Washington, an official Iraqi weekly magazine said. Alef Baa, published by the information ministry, said such a summit was necessary "because it is no longer possible to rely on the non-aligned movement which has no role in the face of the United States." The weekly said the summit should include Iraq, Yugoslavia, Cuba, Sudan, Libya and "Palestine," since they are all "victims of American policy, of a single power or what is called the new world order." The summit would also be open to those who risk attack, including Syria, India, Iran, Malaysia and Indonesia and those with civil wars encouraged by the United States like Somalia and Afghanistan. Alef Baa said.

U.N. approves oil spare parts for Iraq

BAGHDAD (R) — The United Nations Sanctions Committee on Iraq has approved 22 more contracts for spare parts to repair Iraq's sanctions-hit oil industry, a U.N. report said. "During the week to 16 April, the [Security Council's Sanctions] Committee approved an additional 22 contracts for \$7,432,006 worth of oil industry spare parts," said the report handed to reporters on Wednesday. "The total number of oil sector contracts approved to date is 431 worth \$348.1 million," it said, adding that the number of contracts on hold was 104 worth \$42.5 million. The report, issued by the office of Iraq programme in New York, said that the total of contracts received for approval was 665 with a value of \$375.4 million. Under phases four and five of the U.N.-Iraq oil-for-food deal, Baghdad is allowed to buy \$600 million worth of spare parts to upgrade its oil industry which has been severely hit by U.N. sanctions imposed for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iran minister under impeachment threat

TEHRAN (AFP) — An impeachment motion was introduced in Iran's conservative-dominated parliament on Wednesday against moderate Minister of Culture Ataollah Mohajerani, a close ally of President Mohammad Khatami. Thirty-one MPs called for Mohajerani's removal from office and accused him of "laxity" regarding "journalistic and artistic activities, and the defence of Islamic values." Mohajerani, who is also government spokesman, has 10 days to appear before parliament and defend himself against the impeachment bill, and to solicit a new vote of confidence. The MPs accused the pro-Khatami minister of "closing his eyes to subversive activities" of the press, notably certain publications "which blatantly propagandise monarchy, corruption and prostitution," while attacking the "revolution, the Islamic republic and its fundamental principles."

Saudi to open debate on role of women

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia is to open a public debate on the role of women in the kingdom including their right to drive cars, a Saudi official told a newspaper Wednesday. "The Saudi leadership prefers that there is a debate between all the parties concerned, including women themselves, in order to create a very clear picture" of the role of women, the official told Al Sharq Al Awsat. The female official warned that "the government and leadership will not play a legislative role, imposing laws on the role of women in society." Women in Saudi Arabia, which strictly segregates men from women, are only allowed to show their hands and faces in public, although many are completely covered. They are also forbidden from driving. "Some are already raising marginal issues like driving cars or wearing the veil," the official said. She added that the question of women driving was constrained more by "technical issues than social or religious ones."

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